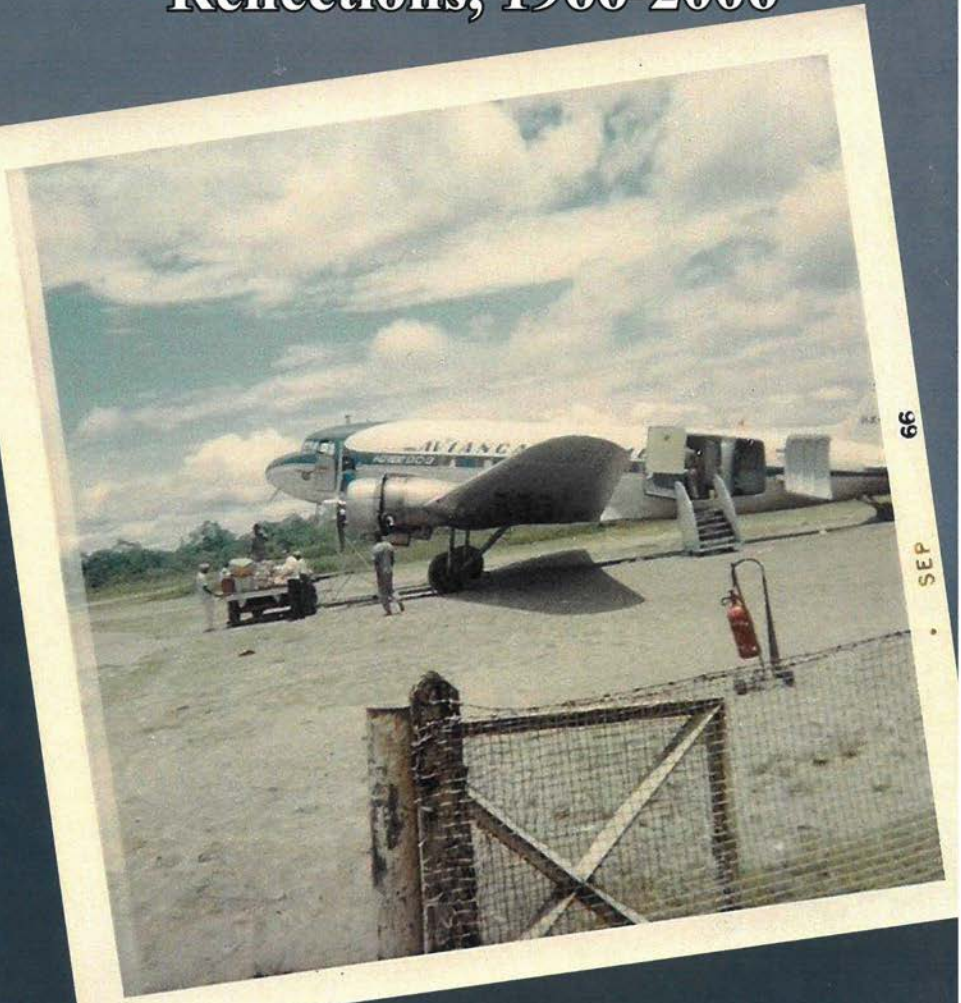
Mennonite Brethren in Global Mission

Observations and Reflections, 1966-2006



Harold Ens

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Observations and Reflections, 1966-2006

Harold Ens

Goessel, KS

Winnipeg, MB

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FOREWORD

This book will not be read and put back on the shelf to be forgotten, but will be consulted again and again. From the beginning of the book to the end it relates how God gave Harold opportunities to teach abroad in other cultures and also be exposed to and do mission work. He accepted God's opportunities. This book is a must read for those who desire to experience God's leading in their life.

Harold's first assignment abroad was as a teacher in Cali, Colombia. That is where our family met him for the first time and came to appreciate his friendship. He attended our Spanish-speaking churches and was exposed to our mission ministry. At that time, little did he or I realize what was in the future for this young professor, but God knew—more teaching opportunities and extensive involvement in mission work in other cultures.

While still involved in missions abroad, Harold was asked to serve as the Latin American Secretary for the Board. Later, he became the General Director. I was on the Board of Missions and Services and became Chairman of the Board while he served. He was a great asset in our board meeting discussions. I was always impressed with the wealth of knowledge he had accumulated from his years of experience in other cultures. I appreciate the insight he gave to us. I highly recommend this book.

Ernest H. Friesen

INTRODUCTION

In the spring of 1966, I felt ready for a career in teaching. I was about to complete my credentialing year after graduating from Fresno State College with a degree in math and science, but was also facing the reality of the Vietnam era draft. Since I was registered as a conscientious objector, I felt it might be best to volunteer for an alternative service assignment rather than first start a teaching career, only to be drafted. Thus I contacted what was then known as the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations of the Mennonite Brethren Conference. I had heard of a program known as Christian Service through which young adults could provide two years of voluntary service. I understood that it could qualify as an alternative to the military.

The Director of Christian Service at that time was Dwight Wiebe, working from the conference headquarters in Hillsboro, Kansas. He processed my application and before the end of the school year, I was accepted to Christian Service and assigned to a teaching role in math at Jefferson School in Cali, Colombia. Thus it was that in August of 1966 I took the first of many jet rides. The decision to go to Cali began a life of service to and through the MB conference that would span parts of five decades.

I am facing the end of this relationship with what is now called MBMS International in June 2006. This book is an effort to record my personal observations and reflections on some of the events of these past forty years. They are years that were marked by significant changes, both in the way we do mission as a Mennonite Brethren Church and in the very nature of this now global family of faith.

While my approach will be largely historical, it will be more intensely personal and anecdotal rather than a comprehensive history. I will comment on some aspects of MB mission prior to 1966 in order to place my own observations in historical context. And while I will comment on some issues of theology, missiology, and ecclesiology, I will defer to other writers like Kasdorf, Toews, and Eitzen for a more comprehensive analysis of MB mission from those perspectives. I also want to clarify that this is not intended as a history of the global MB Church. ICOMB has undertaken such a project to be published for the 150th anniversary celebrations in 2010.

I have chosen to organize this project into three main sections: Section I (Introduction and Chapter One) is the story of my personal connections to Mennonite Brethren missions over this period. Section II (Chapters Two – Nine) includes my reflections on some of the major changes related to aspects of MB mission structure, strategy, and policies. Section III (Chapters Ten – Fourteen) provides an overview of mission efforts during this period in some 78 countries on five continents. A final chapter provides a look into the future of MB mission from my perspective.

As I approached the end of my term as MBMS International's General Director, I was encouraged by several board members and others to write my reflections. It took more than a year for me to decide to do so. I trust that what I've written will be a helpful reminder of God's faithfulness through many changes. I hope it will also encourage others to consider God's call on their lives for a life of mission.

Section I

My Mission Pilgrimage

Chapter One

MY PERSONAL JOURNEY IN MB MISSION

Short Term Service in Colombia (1966-1968)

In 1966, Jefferson School was a small English medium school covering Kindergarten through Junior High levels. It was operated by a parent association, and while many of its teachers came from Mennonite Brethren Christian Service, some 80-90% of its students were from Colombian families. The other 10-20% came mostly from US and Canadian families working in Colombia, including quite a number from our MB missionary families living in Cali.

The school environment as well as the reality of living in Cali provided many opportunities for cross-cultural learning. Although my teaching was done in English, most other communication in the city needed to be in Spanish. And while I did not become fluent during those two years, I did develop a vocabulary that allowed for basic communication to take place in Spanish. Serving as secondary principal during the second year awakened my gifts in administration. I also developed a deep respect for, and even a love for, the Latin culture.

Another opportunity for learning while in Cali was through our relationship as Christian Service workers with the over twenty MB missionaries who were then serving under the Board of Foreign Missions. Before the end of 1966, that Board was merged with the Board of General Welfare and thus we all served under the Board of Missions/Services with Vernon Wiebe as General Secretary. We began to meet monthly as a full group of MB workers from North America, then numbering more than thirty adults and thirty children. It was an opportunity to build strong personal relationships with our missionaries, to see the work of church planting first-hand and even to assist in that ministry. It was at this time that I developed a friendship with Ernie and Elsie Friesen, never even dreaming that he would later become the Chair of our MBM/S Board while I would serve as General Director. I was also able to observe the work of national Colombian workers and even develop relationships with some of them. I became especially close to Hugo Zor-

rilla, who began service as my pastor at the San Fernando MB Church during my first year in Cali. He and his wife Norma later also served as our missionaries in Spain while I was their Administrative Secretary for Iberia, and then on the Board of MBMS International for several years while I was General Director.

But, perhaps the greatest way in which that term of Christian Service changed the rest of my life was the fact that I met the person during those years in Cali who would become my wife and companion in mission. Helen Claassen had graduated from Tabor College and had come to teach an elementary grade at Jefferson School. We saw each other not only at school, but also in our monthly meetings and visits with the missionaries in Cali. I was impressed by her commitment to the Lord and by the fact that she volunteered to be the pianist in Pastor Zorrilla's church. We were engaged shortly after returning to the US and we were married in Hillsboro, Kansas, in December of 1968.

An Observer-Participant in the Congo.

Having settled in Fresno, California, in January 1969, Helen and I were busy with our jobs, she as a welfare department worker and I as a junior high teacher. We were also active participants in the College Community MB Church, and I pursued graduate studies in school administration. However, in the back of our minds was the idea that our times of cross-cultural service had not ended and that someday we would again serve in an overseas assignment. What we did not realize was how short our time in Fresno would be at this stage of our lives.

One evening in July of that same year, we learned through friends from Christian Service days that the school for missionary children in the Congo was in need of a math teacher. We spent much of that night in conversation and prayer as to whether that might be God's call to us. The next day we contacted the principal of the school in Congo and within two weeks, both Helen and I had resigned our jobs in Fresno and were preparing to head to Africa.

From August 1969 to June 1973, I served as a math and science teacher at the American School of Kinshasa. Helen also taught during our first year there, but the birth of two children, Lowell and Carmen, began a fifteen-year gap in her teaching career. And while officially we were not sponsored in Kinshasa by MBM/S, the fact that we taught our

Mennonite Brethren MK's and attended monthly MB missionary fellowship events meant we were quite aware of the progress of our mission efforts there. We even spent one Christmas vacation period in Kikwit with our missionaries there, Irvin and Lydia Friesen. Some effort was already being made to plant MB churches in the capital city, but many of our missionaries still lived and worked in the interior.

Upon our return to the United States in the summer of 1973, I obtained a teaching position in southern California and we settled down to resume my chosen vocation. I also gave further time to complete my preparations for a career in school administration. However, by the second year it became increasingly clear to us that God had further overseas service in store for us. So once again I contacted the MB Conference office in Hillsboro, and we received applications for missionary service through MBM/S. They sat in the drawer for about six months while we contemplated God's call on our lives. Then we began the application process.

Missionaries in Panama.

We were accepted for missionary service, potentially in Colombia where we had served before, at the start of 1976. However, it was agreed we would spend one year at our Fresno seminary and complete the Missionary Training Institute before our departure. During that year our third child, Matthew, was born in Fresno. In August of 1977 we headed for Spanish language study in Costa Rica. During our eight months in San Jose, we were approached by MBM/S representatives to consider a change in assignment. Missionary visas for Colombia were difficult, if not impossible, to obtain and there was an urgent need in neighboring Panama.

I traveled with John Goertz, former missionary to Colombia and Panama to see the work among the indigenous peoples of Panama's Darien jungle. Work had begun there in 1958 led by veteran missionaries Jacob Loewen and David Wirsche with the Embera and Wounaan people groups. Programs of adult literacy had led to the formation of larger villages and schools for children. Printed Bible stories in their languages had led to the formation of groups of believers and village churches. Now there was a need for high school level education for their children, public health programs, and training in trades and agriculture.

MBM/S had obtained a large Canadian government grant to facilitate many of these efforts. I was to become the director of that development project.

We arrived in Panama City in April of 1978 and almost immediately began planning for the construction of an "Indian Center" in a suburb of the capital, Juan Diaz. Ten young men from Embera and Wounaan villages were chosen for vocational training and came to the city both for study and for practical experience in the building of the center. The skills they acquired were applied in many other construction projects in the decade that followed.

Our nearly eight years in Panama had a profound effect on the future direction of our whole family. We lived in a Panama City community where most of our neighbors spoke only Spanish, but we also spent many days at the Indian Center where a completely different indigenous culture was the norm. Our children attended English-speaking schools in what was then the Canal Zone and on many Sundays our family worshipped with an English speaking congregation in that area. So our children grew up hearing three or four languages and with a very multicultural mindset.

If my talent for school administration had begun to blossom already during those initial two years of service in Colombia, it was during the years in Panama that my broader gifts for administration and program management were practiced and refined. The implementation of the CIDA project required a broad range of administrative and supervisory oversight. But the need to train leaders, both in secular and pastoral roles, gave me broad opportunities for mentoring as well. It was during this period that it became clear that God was calling me to a lifetime of service in this arena. What we did not expect was that we would return to North America with less than ten years on the field in Panama.

Secretary for Latin America.

In October of 1984 I traveled to Reedley, California, together with Embera church leader, Narciso Pacheco, for the triennial convention of the MB General Conference. It was a special celebration event to which many national church leaders had been invited. Also present was the newly appointed General Secretary for MBM/S, Victor Adrian, whom I met for the first time. After the conference event we traveled together in

British Columbia for a number of church ministry visits, during which Victor asked me numerous questions about my vision for global mission. Only later did I find out that I was being "interviewed" for a potential role in mission administration.

Early in 1985 I received an international phone call in Panama from Victor. He told me about the coming retirement of John Wall from the Latin America Secretary's desk. He invited me to move back to North America and to assume that role in the Hillsboro, Kansas, office of MBM/S. It was an invitation to a role for which I felt gifted and called, but the timing was difficult. Our oldest son had just begun high school and a move would be disruptive. We were in the middle of a number of new initiatives with the Panama church, and I wondered if my departure would feel like abandonment. We prayed and processed the idea with our family. They indicated they were willing to make the move. So I took the idea to the Panama church leaders. To my surprise, they affirmed me to accept the invitation, and indicated they would be glad to have someone they knew and trusted at the Latin America desk.

Thus it was that, in the summer of 1985, we said goodbye to friends and colleagues in the cosmopolitan capital city of Panama and took our family to the tiny rural hamlet of Hillsboro. It was perhaps the greatest cultural adjustment that we and our children had experienced in our global wanderings to date. Instead of a world class city with taxis or buses on every corner, we would now live in a town where most everything was within walking distance. Instead of a tropical climate with lush rain forests and where fresh watermelon was a favorite Christmas treat, we would now experience winters with snow and ice.

After a month of orientation with John Wall, my predecessor in the role, I began a process to learn more about our work in seven Latin countries: Mexico, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay, Brazil, and Uruguay (I didn't need orientation to the work in Panama). It was a time for change from mostly rural ministries to mostly urban. It was also a time in which the shape of our partnerships with the maturing Latin American conferences would need to be more thoroughly processed. My facility with both written and spoken Spanish would become an asset in that process.

In February 1986, Victor Adrian planned and then accompanied me on a five-week trip through seven of those Latin American countries,

for both orientation and consultation. I came back from that trip with much greater understanding of the work and workers that I would now be responsible for, ready to give encouragement, counsel, and supervision. However, the trip's length was more than a husband and father of a young family could expect to repeat. I suggested to Victor that my future consultation trips be limited to no more than three weeks under normal circumstances, and he agreed. That was probably the first policy change in which I had a role as an MBM/S staff person.

During the six years that I sat at the Latin Desk, I traveled extensively throughout Latin America, often making at least two trips a year, one to the northern half, and the other to the southern cone countries. That included Portuguese-speaking Brazil, and I was glad to discover that by combining my Spanish fluency with some of the French I had learned in the Congo, I could understand over 90% of what was said and also make myself understood in meetings with Brazilian church leaders or even in preaching. By mid-1986, it was decided that in view of my language abilities, the Iberian Peninsula countries of Spain and Portugal should be added to the Latin Desk. Thus began my regular travel to southern Europe as well.

In June of 1988, Victor asked me to serve as the Associate General Director for Administration, in addition to my role as Latin Secretary. I was given responsibility for many of the routine administrative roles on his desk, such as preparing the agenda for and leading weekly Secretariat meetings. It seemed that he wanted to spend more time with big picture vision, and especially with follow-up from the first ever global consultation on MB mission that was held in Brazil earlier in 1988. I had helped him to plan for that event. Following that, I was also asked to work with Victor on some of the preliminary consultation to produce a new set of mission guidelines that would take MB mission into the 21st century.

General Director.

In October of 1990, the Board of MBM/S held its fall meeting at Hartland Camp in California. One evening the Board held a closed session without staff present. Their main agenda was to discuss the search process to replace Victor Adrian as General Secretary when he would retire in 1992. Part way through their meeting, a messenger came to

my room, asking me to join them. There in front of the fireplace I was asked to consider their invitation to become the next General Secretary of MBM/S. I had not expected such a decision to be made at that meeting and thus asked for a period of time to process my response with family and in prayer. I was given until early January to give a final response.

The decision was not an easy one. My heart was closely tied to the work in the Latin American region, where I had language abilities and missionary experience. And if travel in that region had been a challenge with a young family, what would it mean to take responsibility for the entire global mission program of MBM/S? I sought the counsel of many others, but it was Helen's wise words that probably brought me to a final decision. She reminded me of how often I had talked about the need for further changes in our structures and approach to global mission. If I took the role that was being offered, I would have a much greater opportunity to give leadership to such changes. So by New Year's Day of 1991, I was able to tell the new Board Chairman, Ernie Friesen, that I would accept their invitation. I also shared with him some of my initial ideas for structural change, which he tentatively affirmed. Thus began a thirteen-year journey that would further change my life and MBM/S as I would lead the work of MB global mission into the 21st century.

Those changes in MB mission will be the major theme for the rest of this manuscript. But the decision also brought changes for me and my family. The most immediate was the need to plan another move. For while the international office of MBM/S had been in Winnipeg, Manitoba, for the eight years of Victor's leadership, it would now be moved to Fresno in order to allow for greater interaction with the MB Seminary and the missionary candidates who trained there. And so we matched but failed to surpass our family record of six years in one house that we had set while in Panama. The move from Hillsboro to Fresno was made in August 1991. It was in time to enroll our daughter, Carmen, in Fresno Pacific where she joined her older brother Lowell in his final two years.

Living in Fresno was also in a sense a return to Latin culture, with more than 30% of its population able to speak Spanish when we arrived. By the time I completed my leadership role, that percentage increased to nearly 50%. In such a context, we felt called to get involved with local mission through a Spanish-speaking church plant. Butler Church opened its doors and structures to that vision and we participated for over ten

years in the planting of a Spanish congregation there. All three of our children went with short term summer mission teams to Latin America during this period, and our daughter taught in a bilingual English-Spanish classroom for four years.

A Long-delayed Sabbatical.

During our third term as missionaries in Panama, we had begun to plan for a semester study leave, following a summer furlough in 1985. However, I was told that would need to be postponed if I accepted the call to become Latin America Secretary in the Hillsboro office. We did wait, well beyond the required four years for an administrative sabbatical, since the intensity of the responsibilities did not seem to allow me to get away.

When the call came in 1990 to become General Secretary, plans were again made to take a sabbatical leave prior to beginning the new role. But in March of 1991, I had to take over for Victor Adrian who had been critically injured in an auto accident, thus putting many of my sabbatical plans on hold again. I did manage to spend a week at the Overseas Ministries Study Center in New Haven that November on my way back from a trip to the USSR. However, the responsibilities of creating a new office and building kept me fairly close to the Fresno office through that winter and the spring of 1992. I began my own term as General Director on June 1, 1992, and was formally installed in that role in October of that year.

After seven years in the role of General Director, the Board graciously granted me that long-delayed sabbatical, and even extended it to six months. The timing was good, since with the kids now mostly grown, Helen could join me for parts of it. We started by heading back to OMSC in New Haven in September for two months of intensive mission seminars. It was a refreshing time, as we soaked in the rich fellowship with other mission leaders and national church leaders from around the world. An especially helpful time was a week-long seminar on Islam, with J. Dudley Woodbury from Fuller, Tite Tienou, and Lamin Sanneh.

Following our time in New England, Helen returned to Fresno, while I headed east for a month-long learning visit to Asia. It began with a week of celebration in India for the 100th anniversary of our MB mission partnership there. Then I made my first visit to Indonesia, where

I learned more about Christian witness in the context of the world's largest Muslim population. From Jakarta I traveled to Thailand where I joined three members of the newly appointed Team 2000 for a week of research on possible locations for their new church planting initiative. And finally, I spent the last week of that sabbatical trip in the world's most populous country, China. It was the second country, after India, to which we had sent missionaries from North America in 1901. I wanted to understand how our English teachers with CEE were now giving witness, and also hoped to see what might remain of the earliest church planting effort by the Henry Bartels and their colleagues.

The remaining three months of the sabbatical included a month of vacation with family, a month of reading and reflection, and another month-long learning trip, this time to Africa in January of 2000. It was my first return to the African continent since our departure from Zaire as a young family in 1973. Of course, I wanted to see the changes that 27 years would have made in the Congo, but I also wanted to explore new opportunities for MBMS International outreach and partnership.

My first stop was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia to see with my own eyes what God was doing in and through the Meserete Kristos Church. I had met one of their leaders, Bedhru Hussein, at a mission consultation and he had invited me to visit their rapidly growing conference. For the next stage of my journey I was confronted by the difficult realities of travel between African cities. Having been joined by Pakisa Tshimika, our Africa Director, we headed south via Nairobi to Johannesburg, where we were to meet our Personnel Director, Ron Penner. Then we would again head north along the western edge of the continent to our destination of Luanda, Angola. However, this roundabout trip was delayed further when our flight to Luanda was cancelled for the day and we were forced to spend the night in the Johannesburg airport.

The remainder of my sabbatical trip through Africa included consultations with the MB Church leadership in Angola and Congo, plus participation in a major consultation on ministries to African Initiated Churches in Botswana. Getting to Botswana from the Congo was again a challenge. Leaving Kinshasa one afternoon about 2:00 p.m., I had to travel several thousand miles north to Abidjan, Ivory Coast where I could catch a flight south to Johannesburg. That flight made a stop in Brazzaville at 3:00 a.m. the next day, and as we landed I could see the

lights of Kinshasa across the river, from where I had left the previous afternoon. To top it off, when I finally arrived in Gaberone the following afternoon, my luggage was not with me! Later on in the trip, I was able to place my somewhat momentary travel difficulties in the African context. I met a refugee family at my final stop in Durban, South Africa. They had walked there from Eastern Congo over a period of several months. A couple of 2000-mile detours on jet routing and a one or two-night delay didn't seem so bad in view of that reality.

Travel to Fifty-Five Countries.

While my two sabbatical trips included visits to nine countries and brief stops in several more, they only account for about one-fifth of my global journey. My role took me away from Fresno many times each year. I calculate that I spent between a fourth and a third of my time on the road most years. I've visited some 55 countries in my lifetime, most of them related to my 40 years connected to MB mission. I consider it a great privilege to have met and fellowshipped with so many wonderful brothers and sisters from the global MB church.

And while the international travel was perhaps the most adventuresome, I traveled even more within North America. There were Board meetings and Executive meetings, and conventions and mission consultations. And then especially in the fall and the spring, there were invitations to speak at special local church mission weekends. More than half of those invitations came from Canadian churches, so I learned to speak some of the special words and understand the ways of Canadian culture while enjoying the warm hospitality in the homes of their church members. I treasure the many friendships I made during these visits.

My experiences in overseas travel are too numerous to cover completely in this book. Many of them are detailed in two other manuscripts of personal reflections entitled "My Life in the Air" and "Worldclass Memories." However, I will report a few travel highlights and a few frightful moments of my travel experiences here. With over a million miles behind me, I have a rich storehouse of international air travel memories, not all of them positive! My six-foot plus frame never did fit well into those economy airline seats.

Not all commercial airplanes are maintained to international standards. During our first term in Colombia, we flew in an old DC-3 from

Cali to Condoto in the Choco. I will always remember looking out of the window and seeing all the loose screws that were spinning on the aluminum panels covering the motors and wings. But then there was a half-inch crack in the door frame, so escape should have been no problem in an emergency! Seven years later, we flew on another DC-3 from Kinshasa to the coast for a teacher outing in Zaire. It was much better maintained and with our missionary pilot at the controls, we flew just 500 feet above the Congo River and got some great views of the rapids from the cockpit.

During our years in Panama, I made many trips from the City to the Darien jungles. Some were made in small well-maintained mission airplanes. But many were on a ten-passenger, two-engine, Canadian built "Islander" airplane flown by a small commercial company. On one trip, we were about to begin to take off from a dirt airstrip in the jungle town of LaPalma. The runway covered the distance from the base of a mountain to the river. As the pilot revved up the engines, the plane shuddered and the lady seated next to me screamed. I looked her way and saw that the door was swinging open beside her. I reached across her lap and pulled it shut, holding on to it for the rest of the trip since the latch was loose. The pilot noticed what had happened, but only made a brief "growl" and then took off anyway. On a later flight on the same kind of plane, one of the two engines quit as we were flying over the ocean. We turned around, returning to the city airport with one engine and made a smooth landing.

Take offs and landings can sometimes be hair-raising even in the big jet aircraft. On the way to the Congo the first time, we tried to land in Halifax, Nova Scotia, to visit friends in Christian Service there. It was foggy and as we descended, we saw no sign of an airport. Suddenly, the pilot pulled the plane up and said he thought we had been over the runway but he wasn't sure, so we would try again. After another such unsuccessful attempt, he decided to fly on and we landed in New Brunswick. On our return from Zaire, I was on a flight from Wichita to Los Angeles that made a stop in Albuquerque. The airport there is at quite a high altitude, and as we took off we all heard a thud. After a while the copilot came back into the cabin to look out the windows near the back. He then told us that we had blown a recapped tire on takeoff and that it broke a flap of the wing when it hit. The drag was keeping us from at-

taining full altitude, so we went back and landed between rows of fire trucks, with our heads in crash position. Once again, the landing was smooth.

Runways can sometimes be dangerous, whether in the jungle of Panama or the cities of the United States. I had arrived in the village of Membrillo on a Wycliffe plane for a brief consultation visit. The runway was mostly grass and ran down the center of the village between thatched-roof houses. We would have an extra passenger for take off, so Gordie, our pilot, had carefully measured the runway and trimmed some grass at the end before we boarded to depart. I was seated next to him in the front seat, and as we picked up speed, I felt a slight drag. Then all I could see was the tall grass coming right at the airplane's front window. Before I could scream, Gordie pulled back on the stick and we were airborne just skimming over the trees. He turned to me and asked, "Did you think we wouldn't make it?" When I answered "Yes," he replied, "So did I." We had hit a patch of mud halfway down the grass runway which had slowed our speed.

The other runway problem occurred at a very modern airport in Salt Lake City, Utah. Our flight from Fresno was about to land normally. I could see the parking lots and some of the airport buildings from the window, so I knew we must be over the runway. But then instead of touching down, the pilot put on full power and we rapidly climbed again. As we circled over the city, he told us that another airplane was still on the runway in front of us, so we would have to come around and try again. When a similar incident happened to me again at Salt Lake City a few months later, I decided to avoid that airport for a while and sought alternative routings.

Thunderstorms are never good companions for flying. After a visit to North America in 1984, I was returning to Panama with Narciso Pacheco, for whom this trip had been his first experience of jet travel. As we approached the Panama City airport, we could see lightning flashing all around us. We knew we were over the ocean as we descended lower and lower, since the runway begins just past the coastline. The pilot kept the engines revved up at full speed as we bounced around on the rough air. Then suddenly we were over the runway, but still too high and too fast. We dropped about ten feet onto the concrete with a big thud, as the coffee pots came rolling out of the plane's kitchen and down the aisle.

We were safely home in Panama, but the next day we heard that one of the plane's engines had been damaged in the incident. Some years later on a take off from Omaha following a Board meeting, it was again thunderstorm weather. As we climbed through heavy clouds, there was a flash of light, a shaking of the plane, and then the reading lights went out. After a few tense moments, the pilot announced that we had been hit by lightning and he was checking out the plane's systems. Since everything seemed to be fine, we continued on to Denver.

But travel involved much more than memorable moments on airplanes. My 40 years connected to MB mission also allowed me to meet many wonderful people, participate in many inspiring events, and see some rather awesome sights along the way. Staying in the homes of missionaries during many of my international trips was like having family all around the world. Usually, one of the MK's would give up their bedroom for me during my stay. So depending on their age and gender, I might be lodged in the midst of stuffed animals, doll collections, train sets, or sports equipment. But staying in their room also opened the door for a closer relationship with missionary kids. And since we had three MK's of our own, I could usually relate.

Meeting with missionary parents was both delightful and challenging. Days often began with an early breakfast with the kids who needed to get off to school. Conversation might continue over a second cup of coffee as parents shared the challenges and joys of raising a family overseas. Then it was usually off to consultation meetings for the whole day, returning for an evening session with the missionary parents after the kids were in bed. It was at those times that I heard about other challenges, like conflicts with other missionaries or with national leaders. It was also an opportunity for prayer and encouragement. They were usually long days on duty, maybe 16 or 17 hours.

Meetings with national leaders were both a joy and a challenge. To have made friends with church leaders in so many countries is truly a privilege. I continue to treasure those relationships and to include many of them in my prayers. Relationships were especially close in Latin America where I could converse in Spanish. In other areas, the language barrier sometimes made building relationships more difficult. I especially remember that reality during a visit to Siberia in late 1991. Our delegation of four was lodged several nights at the home of Elder Nicolai

Dueckman. The other three could speak German, and two of them also knew some Russian. I understood a smattering of German but could not speak fluently, and knew no Russian. Late night snack time around the table was filled with conversation, but I sat silently. At one point, elder Dueckman asked the others if I was sick, since I didn't talk!

I've even had some opportunities to see and meet some world leaders in the public arena. While in Zaire, we attended a trade fair where unexpectedly we saw the King of Belgium and the President of Zaire cut the ribbon to open the event. We even got a photo of them on the red carpet! At another event in Kinshasa, we helped to welcome astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first man to walk on the moon. While in Panama, a friend and I were invited to sing a duet for the Ambassador of the United States at his annual prayer breakfast. And during my final visit to Paraguay in 2004, I joined other ICOMB delegates for dinner with the wife of the President. The first lady of Paraguay was a member of an MB church.

But international living and international travel as a part of the MBM/S team also provided many opportunities for activity beyond the routine ministries of a missionary or the long days and endless meetings of an administrative consultation visit. During our residence in Colombia, Congo, and Panama, there were vacation times that allowed us to see the sights.

The salt cathedral near Bogotá and the beautiful beaches of Cartagena which I visited over the Christmas holidays are vivid memories from the years living in Cali. Living in Kinshasa required creativity to get away, but included monkey steaks for Christmas dinner in the interior, and a wonderful summer holiday with the elephants and giraffes in East Africa. It was also the period during which we took 70 days one summer to travel all the way around the world, always heading generally east, from Kinshasa and back to Kinshasa.

Nearly eight years as a family in Panama included many vacation outings to the wonderful Pacific Ocean beaches. But even more frequent were our visits to the engineering wonder of the Panama Canal. We could reach the locks in about 20 minutes from our house, and the kids loved to have a picnic on a grassy hill overlooking them as we watched the ships go by. We even saw the Queen Elizabeth II make a transit, and once made a partial transit ourselves with Lowell's sixth-grade class.

The sights I've enjoyed on my many consultation visits are now a

somewhat fading storehouse of visual memories. A few places of particular significance and whose images are still brilliant in my mind include:

- The ancient Inca capital of Machu Picchu, Peru, high in the Andes above the city of Cuzco. I visited there once while living in Cali, and later went back with Helen at the end of a consultation trip on which she had accompanied me.
- The fabulous waterfalls of Iguazú at the border of Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. I briefly visited the Brazil side during two different trips with board members, and then in 2001 Helen and I were able to vacation there for two days following an ICOMB meeting in Curitiba. A small boat trip to the "devil's throat" from the Argentinean side was especially memorable.
- The "forbidden city" in Beijing and the Great Wall of China, a bit to the north of the capital. Both were reminders that the Chinese people have a long and complex history that spans many centuries.
- Three large statues of Christ, with his arms outstretched. One overlooks the city of Cali, and we hiked to it with the kid's club I helped to teach. A second overlooks the great city of Lisbon, in Portugal. We could drive to its base, high above the river. And the third stands on a high peak, overlooking the harbor and the megacity of Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. All three reminded me of Jesus weeping over the city of Jerusalem. For while the statues overlook them, only a few in these cities are faithful disciples of Jesus.

Closing Out and Passing the Torch.

In late 2002 and early 2003, the Board of MBMSI undertook a second comprehensive evaluation of my work as General Director (Board Minutes, Mar/Apr 2003). The results were shared with me at the Spring 2003 Board meeting in Fresno. I was affirmed for another three to five years in the role as General Director. At the same meeting, the Board noted the fact that I would be approaching retirement in five years and suggested that steps should be taken during this period to prepare for a transition to younger leadership.

With that affirmation of my leadership, I began an intensive effort to complete the work on a proposal for a major change in our support

patterns. We wanted to shift our method for the support of missionaries from the traditional program budget to a more relational giving approach. In order to give more time and priority to this effort, I cancelled my participation in the Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe that summer.

Then, in August of 2003, the Board Executive indicated to me that they were reconsidering the timing of the transition. At the October meeting, the Board held numerous closed sessions. At the end of those meetings, the Board Chair informed me that they would immediately begin a search for a new General Director to replace me in the Fall of 2004. This was difficult for me to understand, especially in view of the comprehensive evaluation completed only six months earlier. However, I continued to focus my efforts at completing the major proposal for changing our support model to one of relational giving. I was able to present that proposal at both the Canadian and US Conference conventions in July of 2004, where it was approved, setting the stage for a new era of missionary sending by our churches.

Randy Friesen was appointed by the Board in the spring of 2004 as my successor. In late August, I met with Randy and the Board Executive in Fresno to review details for a smooth transition. Then I boarded a plane for my final trip to Latin America as General Director, flying to northern Peru to participate in the 20th anniversary of the start of MB church planting there. It had been almost 19 years since my first visit there, and brought back many memories of God's faithfulness. On the evening of August 31, 2004, I entered the Lima airport to check in for my flight home. It was a crowded and chaotic scene, and I had to wait in several long lines. As the clock reached midnight, my flight was called and I boarded the plane free of the burden of leadership for MBMS International. I uttered a prayer for Randy, who had now taken that challenge on his shoulders, and of thanksgiving for having had the privilege to lead this mission effort.

With the support of the Board, I remained available in the months after that day to provide historical perspective to Randy and other staff who have taken on the leadership of MBMS International. With encouragement from Board members and others, I have also taken on the writing of this book in order to share my reflections on God's provision through the 40 years of change in MB mission as I have experienced it.

Section II

Mission Structure, Strategy, and Policies

Chapter Two

CHANGING MISSION STRUCTURES

The first structure for mission by the North American MB churches was the formation of a Committee for Gentile Mission at the convention in 1885 (Kasdorf, 357).This was done to coordinate the raising of funds to be used for missionaries being sent out under other mission agencies. By 1896, it had become the Committee for Foreign Mission, which in 1898 came under the direction of a Mission Board.

In 1899, a decision was reached to create a legal structure in order to be able to send out MB missionaries under MB administration to plant MB churches in India. In October of 1900, at the convention in Buhler, Kansas, the constitution and bylaws were adopted to establish the American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union (Kasdorf, 362), which was registered in Kansas the following month. It was the first legal entity for Mennonite Brethren in North America and it was focused on mission.

In 1909 that constitution was revised to become the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. The administration of foreign mission was now delegated to a nine-member Directorate within the conference structure (369). In 1936, another significant change was made, creating a five-member Board of Foreign Missions and naming H.W. Lohrenz as Secretary Treasurer for the Board. In 1943, he was appointed as the first full-time paid Executive Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions (545). This began a shift in which paid staff would increasingly take responsibility for the day to day operations of the MB mission enterprise. He was followed by A.E. Janzen (1945-1957), J.B. Toews (1958-1963), J.H. Epp (1963-1966), H.R. Wiens (1966-1969), Vernon R. Wiebe (1969-1982), John Wall (1982-1983), Victor Adrian (1983-1992), and myself, Harold Ens (1992-2004).

By 1960, the name of the mission entity had dropped the word "foreign" to become simply the Board of Missions. That was also the year in which the former Krimmer Mennonite Brethren Conference merged with the MBs, during a convention in Reedley, California, which I attended. This meant that their mission boards and mission programs would merge with the MB agencies. Since I had grown up within the KMB church, this was a significant personal change for my exposure

to global mission. As a young boy, I recall the reports in our church by KMB missionaries from Peru and Nigeria. But now we began to receive the *Christian Leader* magazine and read about MB missionaries in many other places as well.

An additional board, the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations was created 1957 to facilitate fraternal and service ministries in cooperation with MCC. In 1963, a recommendation was approved to change the name of the conference to The General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches. It reflected the fact that already in 1948, the MB churches in Paraguay and Brazil had been recognized as the South America District. The Conference was not limited to North America. The recommendation also suggested that this name change would facilitate the objective of creating a Mennonite Brethren worldwide fellowship and mission. However, the further implementation of that goal would need to wait nearly three more decades.

1966, the year I began service in Colombia, was another milestone in the structural change of MB Missions. The Board of Missions and the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations negotiated a merger, which was approved at the convention in Corn, Oklahoma, that year. The new name given to this entity was the Board of Missions and Services. It became known worldwide by its acronym of BOMAS. When Vernon Wiebe became its General Secretary in 1968, he initiated the use of the acronym MBM/S for the agency, seeking to reserve the use of BOMAS for the Board itself. However, in my twenty years of international consultation travel, I have found that the BOMAS identity has stuck in the minds of most overseas partners. BOMAS was charged not only with carrying on the international ministries of both previous boards, but also with the Christian Service program which had both domestic and international components. It was also challenged to implement a more deliberate move in the direction of partnership and internationalization, topics I will address in Chapter 3 (Kasdorf, 390).

On the staff side of mission administration, the single Executive Secretary appointed in 1945 expanded to an Administrative Secretariat with multiple staff as needed in the 1950s. By the time I joined the staff in 1985, a Secretariat of six members was responsible for the day to day operations of the mission. During the six years that followed, that further expanded to nine members.

The administrative office, which for decades had operated in Hillsboro, Kansas, opened a Canadian branch office in the 1970s by relocating the Secretary for Finance, Fred Epp, to Winnipeg. When Victor Adrian took over as General Secretary in 1983, the head office began to function in Winnipeg and the majority of staff was located there. But with two Secretariat members still located in Hillsboro, weekly Secretariat meetings were now done by phone conference call. Conducting business in that format became increasingly difficult with a Secretariat of nine persons on the phone.

As indicated earlier, a proposal for structural change was a part of my acceptance of the leadership role in 1991. When I officially began on June 1, 1992, my title was that of General Director, and together with three other directors, (for Finance, Support Services, and Program), we formed a new leadership team known as the Administrative Council or AC. The proposal to form the AC had created some tension among the Secretariat, since it would eliminate the weekly meetings of the whole staff and in a sense create a new staff hierarchy. However, several open forums for discussion of the need for change resolved most questions and the new structure for staff was implemented.

In addition, the Board decided to close the office in Hillsboro, and I moved to Fresno where the new head office would be located. The Winnipeg office continued to have a significant staff, including two of the four members of the Administrative Council. Thus, our monthly meetings of the AC were still held by phone conference call, just as those of the Secretariat had been, but with only four persons involved, they were much more efficient.

Further change came following the Board's 1998 decision to approve the recommendation of two Winnipeg consultants to establish a unified management center in Fresno. For a few months, Administrative Council meetings were held around the conference table, with no need for a speaker phone. That changed when the director of YMI was added to the Administrative Council in 1999. Other expansions also came to the administrative team in response to changing realities in our constituency.

In October of 1997, the name of the agency was changed again, this time to Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International, reflecting the growing global nature of our vision and team. Officially, we used

the name of MBMS International, but it was the short acronym, MBMSI, that became most frequently used around the world. The oversight for our overseas program on four continents was in some cases placed in the hands of Regional Program Directors on those continents.

It is worthy of note how the formal legal structure for MB mission from the North American churches came full circle over a century of change. As mentioned earlier, the first legal structure was incorporated in Kansas as the American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union in 1900. That structure was transformed nine years later into a church conference, with the mission enterprise now directed by one of the boards of that conference. That basic structure continued for the next 91 years, with the Board of Missions having no separate legal incorporation. This meant that all property and bank accounts of MBMS International were actually held by the General Conference or later, for those assets in Canada, by the Canadian MB Conference.

However, in 1999 the General Conference voted at the convention in Wichita to begin to divest itself of its ministries and to then cease operations. MBMS International needed to find a new home. Over the following year I , along with several other board members, participated in a number of sessions together with the transition task force of the General Conference and representatives of the Canadian and US MB Conferences. Various options for the ongoing work of global mission were considered. Some suggested that global mission might better be administered by each of the national conferences in Canada and the United States. However, in time, it became clear that there was still a desire to continue as a bi-national mission agency, with an additional provision for other national MB conferences to join in the future if they wished to do so. Thus, in August of 2000, a new religious non-profit corporation was registered in the state of California with the name of Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International. It is owned jointly by the US and Canadian MB conferences as partners. This action returned the structure for MB mission from North America to a status it had at the start in 1900, that of its own legal charter.

A further structural change occurred in the 2004-2006 period, with my departure from the role as General Director. In approving the appointment of Randy Friesen as General Director, the Board agreed to locate him in the Abbotsford, BC office, while maintaining a significant

office presence in Fresno. In reality, Abbotsford has become the head office, with all members of the Lead Team now located there. The Fresno office has been significantly downsized, with only two full-time staff remaining at this writing. The Wichita office is presently staffed by a part-time assistant. The former YMI head office in Waterloo, Ontario, has become a new branch office for a Regional Mobilizer covering Eastern Canada. However, even with the headquarters now in Canada, the MBMS International structure maintained its legal charter in California.

Chapter Three

PARTNERSHIP, INTERNATIONALIZATION, AND ICOMB

The concept of partnership became a frequent topic for discussion in the decades of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Our mission efforts had resulted in the formation of growing and maturing MB churches in places like India, Congo, and Colombia. These churches were now forming their own conferences with national leadership and structures. In a 1963 presentation to the General Conference convention, General Secretary J.B. Toews called for "Obedience in Partnership" in which the older churches would stand together with the younger churches in a worldwide fellowship (Kasdorf, 558).

By the time of the 1966 convention in Corn, Oklahoma, some progress had been made in this area as North American missionaries were now being sent to countries where national conferences existed only upon the invitation of that conference. Furthermore, the Board of Missions was interested in encouraging an interest in foreign mission within the younger conferences. It accepted the following recommendation: "That this Board declares itself ready to act on behalf of the younger churches abroad as 'Sending Agency' into foreign fields where the MB Conference has work" (Board Minutes, Spring 1966: 34, 66-76). Later that same year, the Board adopted a policy that would allow for MBM/S to provide partial financial support for such missionaries.

However, in his review of these discussions and attempts at change from the early 1960s to the early 1980s, Hans Kasdorf points out that "despite strong administrative determination to make partnership work, and despite some modest success, the progress has been disappointing at best" (560). He outlined some of the factors that hindered progress, including the fact that certain structural changes simply moved decision making authority from the Missionary Council, composed of North Americans on the field, to the Administrative Secretariat, composed of North Americans in the home office. However, there was ongoing discussion of the need to consult and there were repeated calls for a

global consultation event. In 1981, it was agreed to invite representative delegates from other MB conferences to the convention of the General Conference in 1984.

In 1984, speaking for the first time to a General Conference convention as General Secretary of MBM/S, my predecessor, Victor Adrian, again emphasized the need to pursue partnership and he began to outline the internationalization of Mennonite Brethren mission efforts more broadly. I had accompanied Narciso Pacheco, the leader of the national conference in Panama, to that convention. He was one of the national conference leaders who had been invited to this first of several celebrations of a century of MB mission. In separate sessions ahead of the convention, intensive discussions were held between MBM/S leadership and these overseas conference leaders. As a result, an international Planning Committee of eight members was formed to organize the first International Consultation on MB Mission to be held in Curitiba, Brazil in February, 1988. Victor Adrian, General Secretary of MBM/S was chairman of the committee.

The story of that 1988 event is more fully recorded in a book edited by Victor Adrian and Don Loewen entitled *Committed to World Mission*. It brought together 805 registered delegates from 15 countries where the Mennonite Brethren Church was present. Since I had joined the Administrative Secretariat in 1985 as Secretary for Latin America, I became involved in a variety of tasks in the planning for the consultation. Its focus was clearly prioritized on issues related to global mission by Mennonite Brethren. Plenary speakers were drawn from the five continents where the MB Church exists. Workshop leaders also reflected the international and diverse nature of the MB global reality, and simultaneous translation was provided to accommodate the five major languages spoken by Mennonite Brethren. I was responsible to help coordinate the translation team. Evening celebration services drew as many as 1,400 people, with many from the local Mennonite Brethren churches joining the delegates for those events. Enthusiastic worship singing was led by local Brazilian pastor, Robert Lay. Using both Portuguese and other languages of the MB family, it provided us with a glimpse of that scene described in Revelation when we will worship together around the throne.

This consultation would have significant impact on the direction of MB mission over the following decade and beyond. In a workshop I

led on internationalization, I projected the more deliberate implementation of that 1966 decision of our board to serve as a sending agency for missionaries from other continents. In fact, a draft "International Handbook" was made available for conference leaders. It outlined how conferences outside of North America could prepare, appoint, and send missionaries to third countries under the umbrella of the North American Board of Missions and Services. In addition, a proposal was discussed for MBM/S to begin to appoint staff members as Regional Directors from the continent they served.

But perhaps the most significant event arising from Curitiba 1988 resulted from a meeting called by General Conference moderator, Herb Brandt. While not a part of the official consultation agenda, it brought together the conference leaders of all MB groups present to discuss the possible formation of some kind of worldwide MB fellowship. The primary outcome of the meeting was to agree to meet again as global MB conference leaders in connection with the Mennonite World Conference Assembly to be held in Winnipeg in 1990.

That meeting took place in the summer of 1990 on the campus of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg, just prior to the MWC Assembly. About fifty individuals participated, including most of the Administrative Secretariat of MBM/S. Leadership was given by the Executive of the MB General Conference. There was broad consensus that some kind of framework should be developed that would facilitate ongoing dialogue between the various MB conferences then in existence. However, there was also some level of reluctance to create another level of bureaucracy. To limit the potential costs of future meetings, it was decided initially to create the International Committee of Mennonite Brethren with representation from each of the five continents rather than from each conference. Latin America would have two representatives because its conferences were more numerous and spread out than those of other continents. The next moderator of the General Conference would serve as the first chairman of what would become known as ICOMB.

Edmund Janzen was chosen as moderator of the General Conference later that year, and soon planning began for the next meeting of this new Mennonite Brethren global entity. Because ICOMB had no staff, I made our MBM/S staff available to assist in this process. It had been suggested that regional consultations should be included in the meeting

schedule at three or four-year intervals. Juan Veron took the initiative to organize the first such regional consultation for Latin America in July of 1992, held at the Vista Alegre campground in Paraguay.

The first actual business meeting of the ICOMB committee took place immediately following that regional consultation in Asuncion. Finances for this event again included major support from MBM/S, plus voluntary contributions from each of the conferences represented. Draft bylaws were discussed and were approved the next year at the 1993 meeting of ICOMB in Winnipeg. The four purposes were stated as follows:

1. To articulate and promote a vision for internationalization of the mission and ministries of the Mennonite Brethren Church on a global basis.
2. To facilitate inter-conference communication and information flow, thereby enhancing spiritual unity and brother/sisterhood among Mennonite Brethren Churches of the World.
3. To provide a framework (regional and/or global) for the exploration of mutual conference concerns such as the Confession of Faith, pastor-church relationships, calling out leaders, leadership and lay training, ethical issues, publication of Christian literature, evangelism and church planting, etc.
4. To develop a forum for mutual encouragement—a cooperative church (conference)-to-church (conference) partnership that transcends ethnic, cultural, and language barriers and that celebrates our oneness in Jesus Christ. By the 1997 meeting in Calcutta, India, two modifications to the bylaws were approved. These included a fifth point of purpose:
5. To promote and manage a world relief fund for use by member conferences.

The other major change was to invite a representative from each member conference to the ICOMB annual meetings, rather than to continue the representation by continent.

Over the first eight years of its existence, ICOMB continued to receive considerable administrative support for communication and travel arrangements through the head office of MBMS International in Fresno. As MBMSI General Director, I was asked to serve as an ex-officio member of ICOMB and was present at all but two of the annual meetings

between 1992 and 2004. Two things stand out in my mind as the major achievements of ICOMB during that twelve-year period. Both had an impact on the way we as Mennonite Brethren relate to each other in a global family.

The first was the Mennonite Brethren Global Consultation organized by ICOMB in Buhler, Kansas in July of 1999. As at the 1988 Curitiba event organized by MBM/S, translation of the sessions was provided through earphones for the five major languages of Mennonite Brethren. Plenary speakers came from all continents where the MB Church is present, and workshops covered a variety of concerns in addition to missions. Because the event was held in North America, many more North American MBs were able to experience the new reality of the global MB family, especially in the evening services. A highlight of the event was the premier exhibition of a new ICOMB sponsored video called "Our Global Family." It had been produced at the MB studio in Asuncion, Paraguay and included scenes of ministry from all the conferences. Copies were made with the sound track in each of the five primary languages of the global MB churches. These were distributed at Buhler for delegates to take home, thus enhancing our sense of unity in a global family.

The second is a document that is beginning to unite our global family—the ICOMB Confession of Faith. At the meeting in Guatemala in 2000, ICOMB delegates brought copies of several different versions of Mennonite Brethren confessions that were in use in their respective conferences. A review and discussion revealed both commonalities and differences. Some questioned why the North American conference had made changes to earlier versions, without consultation with the global MB family. It was agreed to gather additional copies and translations for the meeting in Curitiba in 2001.

The following year, further discussion resulted in a decision to form an international task force that would seek to write a common ICOMB Confession of Faith. The task force, led by German pastor Heinrich Klassen, was able to prepare a draft document during the 2002 meeting in Abbotsford. After further editing by the task force and consultation with conferences, ICOMB gave final approval to the new global confession at its meeting in Asuncion in 2004. While individual MB conferences around the world still retain their own unique confessions, the ICOMB

confession is now the basis upon which newly formed conferences can apply for recognition in the global family and membership in ICOMB.

In addition to its support for ICOMB, MBMSI continued to pursue its own agenda for internationalization. Over the period from 1986 to 2004, this would be implemented at three levels; 1) the appointment of missionaries, 2) the selection and placement of staff, and 3) at the board level.

Appointment of International Missionaries.

MBM/S had already begun to appoint missionaries from outside North America to a limited extent prior to the consultation of 1988. Three Paraguayan couples were appointed, during the administration of J.B. Toews, to serve as missionaries in their own country, with MBM/S oversight and support. One of those, Albert and Anna Enns, had served a short term in Colombia in the mid-80s, with another, Hans Pankratz, serving a short term in northern Peru. Another couple from Germany, Gerhard and Maria Duerksen, had served one term on our MBM/S team in Madrid, Spain in the 1980s.

However, following the global consultation in Curitiba, further steps were taken to increase the international appointment of missionaries who came from countries and MB Conferences outside of North America and would serve with MBM/S teams in a third country. The MBM/S International Handbook indicated that the sending conference should provide at least some of the financial support for their missionaries, setting their support level in consultation with the MBM/S office. In reality, there was a wide diversity in how support for these international missionaries was provided. Those sent from Japan and Germany were fully supported by their home churches, while those sent from the churches in Colombia and Congo were at least 90% supported with North American funds.

Between 1988 and 2004, at least 22 new missionaries from outside North America were sent out through MBMSI under these internationalization guidelines. They included: 1) Two single women from Japan, one to Pakistan and one to Thailand; 2) Two couples and one single man from the Congo – to Angola, South Africa, and Burkina Faso; 3) Two couples and one single woman from Brazil – to Portugal and Angola; 4) One couple from Germany to Lithuania; 5) One couple from Paraguay

to Colombia; and 6) Three couples from Colombia – one to Peru, one to Panama, and one to Mexico. MBMSI also helped to facilitate the sending of two Japanese couples as missionary church planters to California, but they worked within the structures of the US MB Conference.

These efforts at partnership in mission through the international missionary sending program of MBMSI have had a mixed review. The fact that over 20 have been sent out certainly affirms the fact that God is gifting and calling people for cross-cultural mission from all parts of the MB global family, not just from North America. However, some have questioned the wisdom of sending them under the oversight of a mostly North American structure and in some cases with mostly North American funds. At its meeting in Paraguay in June 2004, ICOMB called on my successor, Randy Friesen, to organize a mission consultation in Abbotsford, in January 2005. Mission representatives of some ten MB conferences participated, along with a number of missionaries, MBMSI staff, and other invited guests.

In a sense, this consultation was a follow-up by a smaller group of delegates to the event in Curitiba in 1988, with its focus on global mission by Mennonite Brethren. Similar to that event, it included substantial staff support from MBMSI. However, this time it was called at the request of and with the major financial support of ICOMB. A key recommendation coming from the consultation was that ICOMB establish a Mennonite Brethren Global Mission Alliance. Membership in the Alliance would be composed of mission representatives of MB national conferences that have a mission sending structure or the intention of developing one. A more complete description of the purpose and function of the Alliance is found in the "Resolutions" document that was developed at the Abbotsford meeting. At the April 2005 ICOMB meeting in Japan, those resolutions were accepted and the proposed direction of the Global Mission Alliance (GMA) was affirmed.

Selection and Placement of Staff

Another level at which internationalization has been addressed was that of the MBMSI administrative staff. As that staff grew in the 1970s and 1980s, the single "Field Secretary" had been expanded to include two regional program administrators. Peter Hamm, based in Winnipeg, was responsible for the work in Africa, Asia, and Europe. John Wall,

based in Hillsboro, was responsible for Latin America. Both were Canadians, though they had some overseas missionary experience in their respective regions. When I replaced John Wall in 1985 at the Latin America desk, an American citizen with experience in Colombia, Zaire, and Panama was added, still based in Hillsboro.

As the commitment to internationalization grew, the Board approved both expansion and change in the program staff for MBM/S. The first came in 1989 when Jacob Thielmann, a Canadian missionary living in Austria, was appointed as the first Europe Secretary to live on that continent. A few years later, in September 1993, an Austrian, Franz Rathmair, became the first non-North American to be appointed by MBM/S to a role in the administrative staff as Regional Program Director for Europe. He opened our European office in the facilities of the MB Church in Steyr, Austria, from where he served in this role for the next ten years.

Meanwhile, at the 1992 ICOMB regional consultation in Paraguay, I had given an open invitation to our more mature MB conferences in Brazil, Colombia, and Paraguay to help us to discern someone to fill the role as Regional Program Director for Latin America. Three potential candidates emerged from Paraguay and Brazil, but over the next year, none became available for this ministry. Thus in June 1993, the MBM/S Board appointed Harold Siebert, Canadian missionary in Bogotá, Colombia, as our Regional Program Director for Latin America, on a half-time basis. Thus, just as had happened first in Europe, the office moved to the continent, but the staff person was still a North American.

However, the search for a Latin American to fill that role continued. I had been introduced to a Colombian brother, Miguel Forero, who had served as a missionary with Campus Crusade in both the Dominican Republic and in Canada. While in Ontario, he had become a part of the MB church planting efforts there. Upon his return to Bogotá, he became the pastor of the new MB church among professionals that had been planted by our mission team there. After a period of discernment, Miguel was appointed by the MBMSI Board in July 1997 as our Regional Program Director for Latin America. He served in this role from his Bogotá office for eight years until staff restructuring eliminated this position in 2005. Miguel brought a fresh perspective to our work in Latin America from within the Latin culture. He was very instrumental in recruiting the ten or more missionaries sent by our Latin conferences through MBMSI

during this period. He also worked tirelessly to help Latin MB conferences discover and develop their own resources and become less dependent on MBMSI subsidies.

Full implementation of our internationalization goals for our Africa and Asia desks turned out to be more difficult. In May 1994, the Board appointed Pakisa Tshimika to a quarter-time position serving as our Regional Program Director for Africa, based in Kinshasa, Zaire. However, he relocated to Fresno in 1998, from where he continued to carry this role until his resignation in 2002. At that point, Nzash Lumeya, another Congolese serving part-time as a missions professor at MBBS, took on the role, still based in Fresno. However, his service also ended with the restructuring of the head office to Abbotsford in 2005 and the elimination of this staff position.

The Asia desk never made it to Asia. During much of the 1990s, the role was carried by Dale Warkentin, former missionary to Indonesia, from his Fresno office. I initiated several attempts during that time to appoint someone from Japan or Indonesia to this role, but without success. From 1998 – 2002, the Asia desk was located in Wichita, where former Thailand missionary, Russell Schmidt, served half-time in this role and half-time in constituency ministries. Then it moved back to Fresno, where Saji Oommen, an American with Indian heritage, became Regional Program Director for Asia. During the final months of my tenure as General Director, plans were approved by the MBMSI Board to move the Asia desk to Delhi, India, where Saji would serve as a part of the new church planting team as of July 2005. However, those plans were also cut short by the restructuring of the administrative team. All four Regional Program Director positions were eliminated from the structure.

Board Level

Internationalization at the level of policy decisions had been a topic of discussion among a variety of conference leaders since 1963. However, it was my predecessor, Victor Adrian, who again placed this on the agenda of the MBM/S Board. In his report to the Board of October 20, 1986, he stated;

"Should we at this point of growth and this point of opportunity begin to include national church perspectives and national church par-

ticipation in making plans for regional growth and development? Should we, for example, have a Latin American Council or a Latin American Commission which would include several representatives from Latin American churches who would help us shape recommendations for Board acceptance? Should we have at least one regional representative from Latin America to be a member of the Board at some point in the near future?" (Board Report, Oct. 20-22, 1986).

That question was discussed at the Curitiba consultation in 1988 and again at the Latin American ICOMB consultation in Paraguay in 1992. But it was not until the MBMSI Board's meeting in Calgary in October 1997 that action was taken to provide for the inclusion of non-North Americans on the Board. From that point forward, it was a common practice for the Board to invite someone from another MB conference to sit in its semi-annual meetings as an observer-participant. Then, at its meeting in Abbotsford in 2002, a formal invitation was given to ICOMB to appoint a voting representative to the MBMSI Board. While ICOMB did not fully accept that invitation, citing a variety of questions about its appropriateness, it did send its chairman, Alexander Neufeld from Germany, as an observer-participant in 2003. During 2004, Victor Wall from Paraguay participated in MBMSI board meetings in the same role.

With the formation of the new Global Mission Alliance, it appears that the MBMSI Board will again become strictly North American. In April 2005, Victor Wall was appointed as the first Executive Secretary of ICOMB, and in that role participates in the annual meetings of the newly formed Global Mission Alliance. MBMSI is represented by its General Director.

Chapter Four

RECRUITMENT, TRAINING, AND CARE OF MISSIONARIES

The work of MB mission has always been focused by those who felt called by God to leave their homes and to cross cultural boundaries to expand the frontiers of the kingdom. Their call was usually considered a lifetime commitment, with contact with North American churches coming only every five to seven years at best. In the early decades, those called to the Indians of Oklahoma and to the Telegu people of India were sent out through the emerging mission structure of the North American MB churches. Others who felt called by God to overseas missionary service were not accepted or sent by the conference mission structure. Thus Mennonite Brethren formed other parachurch mission structures to begin new work in China (1901) and in the Congo (1913). It was several decades before those missionaries and their ministries were accepted as a part of the conference mission effort.

In 1966, the General Secretary of the Board of Missions reported to the convention in Corn, Oklahoma, that missionary recruits from MB churches were becoming fewer and fewer (Kasdorf, 480). He challenged the delegates present from the North American churches to renew their commitment to nurture the missionary call in their local churches, schools, and homes. Then, at the 1984 convention in Reedley, Victor Adrian issued a call for our churches to send out a hundred new missionaries through MBM/S in the next five years.

As a part of the office administrative staff during those years, I became one of the recruiters in that effort. During visits to churches for mission conferences, I met with pastors and with interested young adults in an effort to encourage consideration of a call to missions. I also made one or two trips a year from Hillsboro to Fresno to meet with seminary students who might consider a call to overseas mission. And because my focus at the time was Latin America, and we had many openings for workers there, I was able to influence many young couples and singles to accept an assignment in Latin America. Between 1985 and 1993, we were able to send out many new workers to that region and elsewhere.

However, financial support was a limiting factor, and one year over 20 candidates who had completed the missionary training course were held back due to lack of finances.

Later, as General Director, I continued to recruit, and also facilitated the expansion of our staff to add more people whose focus was recruitment. We had Church Relations staff only in Abbotsford and Fresno for five years. Then we were able to again place Mission Mobilizers in both Wichita and Winnipeg by 1998 to further increase recruitment efforts. As a missionary movement, the Mennonite Brethren have seen many heed the call to mission. In fact, I was often reminded by leaders of other mission agencies that for the size of our denomination in North America, we have sent out a disproportionately large number of missionaries. When we celebrated the 100th anniversary of MBMSI in 2000, a large panel was displayed with the names of over 2,400 persons who had served through this mission structure as resident missionaries over a century of mission. Many more Mennonite Brethren have gone overseas through other mission agencies as well.

In 1996, the Board approved the creation of the Mission Associate designation as one of four categories of workers being recruited and sent by MBM/S. It would include those going overseas as vocational missionaries, primarily supported by their work. It was not yet intended to facilitate joint appointments with other North American agencies. That had been a policy of the KMB mission board and thus MBM/S had supported some workers under other agencies following the MB/KMB merger in 1960. However, a resolution of the Board in March 1966 concluded that "we cannot send out and support new missionaries under other mission societies."

As I traveled in the constituency, however, there were frequent requests from churches to be able to send their missionaries out through MBM/S, even if they would be supervised by another agency on the field. In the fall of 1998, the Board approved a recommendation for the expansion of our Mission Associate category. Under this new approach, it would be possible for missionaries who would serve with specialized agencies like Wycliffe, World Concern, or Arab World Ministries to be sent out as MBMSI missionaries. These workers would be considered as "joint appointments." and their financial support would come from "coreplus giving" designated for their support, rather than come out

of the core general budget. Guidelines for such appointments were approved the following April and the number of workers sent out in this category rapidly expanded. Another result was that the number of countries in which MBMSI had resident missionaries also increased.

Recruitment was not the only area of increased effort that facilitated sending and service. Specialized training also became an important part of the process in which MBMSI was involved. For some twelve years starting in 1976, Hans Kasdorf led a six to nine week summer missionary training school for MBM/S candidates called Church Mission Institute or CMI. Helen and I participated in one of the early sessions in Fresno in 1977 before heading to Panama. It included components of missionary anthropology, field studies, and linguistics. It also provided basic orientation to MBM/S policies and practices.

In 1984, the formation of a Center for Training in Mission/Evangelism in Fresno was approved as a joint effort of the Seminary and MBM/S. It would operate under the umbrella of the Seminary Board, but would have its own oversight from a joint CTM/E Commission. It would operate a "Track One" mission training component within the context of those pursuing a seminary degree. However, the newer component, launched in the Fall of 1987 by CTM/E, was a "Track Two" of one semester for those who did not have and were not pursuing a seminary degree at the time. Director for the program was Henry Schmidt, professor of mission and evangelism at the Seminary. In its first three years of operation, the CTM/E Track Two enrolled about 20 candidates per year. For the next five years, this became the primary preparation route for MBM/S missionaries before being sent to the field.

Following the move of Henry Schmidt into the seminary presidency in 1992 the Track Two program was again moved to a summer program known as Missionary Training Institute or MTI. In 1998, a new option was added when the Church Planting Residency program was introduced through CTM/E. It was a joint effort of the Seminary with the Canadian and US Conference evangelism boards along with MBMSI. It offered a one-year training component at the seminary, which included MTI, followed by a one or two-year internship in a domestic or overseas church planting setting. The internship phase was under the mentorship of an experienced church planter.

At this writing, with the move of the MBMSI head office to Abbots-

ford along with a new Lead Team in place and a transition in funding models, it appears that training and orientation for missionary service through MBMSI is again in a period of transition. A one-week orientation and discernment experience called Summer Adventure was held in Abbotsford in August 2005 with 18 participants. Some of those are now receiving training at the Langley campus of MBBS/ACTS in British Columbia, as a part of a new training approach called TREK 3. It is anticipated that after a semester of study, they will go out on an initial 30-month overseas ministry experience, followed by further discernment.

Missionary care and missionary retention were also frequent topics of discussion within the MBMSI Board and administrative staff over the past four decades. A significant step toward greater retention in an age of jet travel was taken in March 1966. Instead of the expected term of service of six to eight years that had earlier been the standard, the MBM/S Board approved a set of four options for the length of a missionary term. Taking family needs and assignments into account, a missionary could now return for furlough after three to five years. The length of furlough was adjusted accordingly, with 32 months on the field followed by a 4-month furlough as the new standard.

In 1973, the matter of term length was again on the agenda of the Board. The ease of air travel made even shorter terms an option. Families with school age children often could not easily be gone from the field for four months. So an option of 22 months on the field with just a two-month furlough was introduced. In all cases, the vacation time for the year of furlough was considered to be a part of furlough.

In 1995, the Board appointed a task force with the assignment to do a total review of the missionary term, furlough, and vacation policy. I was a participant in that study which included surveys and interviews with missionaries, pastors, and others. As a result, the term "furlough" was eliminated from the worker handbook and replaced by "Ministry in North America" or MINA. Missionaries were encouraged to spend their regular vacation times during their term in their region of service. The standard term was defined as 31 months on the field, followed by 5 months of MINA. Of that period in North America, one month was to be considered vacation while the other four months were to be used for church deputation, strengthening relationships with family and support-

ers, and for possible seminars or other renewal activities. Missionaries who could not take a full five months for MINA were allowed to "store up" some of it for an extended home leave in the future.

Just prior to ending my service as General Director in 2004, the options for MINA were again reviewed. As a result much greater flexibility was introduced to term lengths and MINA policy. With global travel having become a normal part of life and the need to maintain contact with relational supporters in a new funding model, MBMSI missionaries can now return to North America more frequently if needed. As long as at least one year is spent on the field between such visits, they can configure their terms to meet their specific needs.

Under the leadership of General Secretary Vernon Wiebe, the care concern for continuing workers and the orientation of new workers were brought together in an annual one-week summer event known as Worker Retreat. Our first such experience was held at Hartland Camp in California in the summer of 1977. Those of us completing the Church Mission Institute joined with all missionaries on furlough in North America for a time of fellowship, recreation, inspirational speakers, and some in-service training.

Worker Retreat was a key time for the veterans of missionary service to instruct and encourage those about to leave for the field. It was also an opportunity for building MBM/S team relationships that would continue at long-distance by international letters and later by email. And for missionary kids, it was something just short of heaven, as they could share experiences with other third-culture kids. The remainder of our Worker Retreat experiences as a missionary family took place at the Deer Creek campground in Colorado. While the scenery there was majestic, the facilities were somewhat rustic, and for older missionaries and young families just home from the field, it was not always a setting conducive to renewal.

In the late 1980s and into the 1990s three changes were made to the Worker Retreat format that would increase the level of care provided to workers on furlough while also focusing the element of in-service training. Steps to improve the level of care included moving the location to facilities that provided greater convenience and comfort. The Cedar Springs Conference Center in northern Washington became a favorite spot. However, in years of the General Conference convention, the event was usually held in a college dormitory setting near the convention.

The second enhancement of care was to have an on-site psychologist available at each event for both seminars and counseling. This related to the fact that beginning in 1988, we introduced a requirement for psychological testing and interview of all new missionary candidates. The presence of our consulting psychologist, Al Dueck, at the retreats gave opportunity for follow up of those new workers as well as for interaction with veterans. The third change was to the name of the event. Instead of being called a retreat, it became the Missionary Enrichment Seminar or MESA for short. A variety of workshop options were offered in the afternoons, in addition to keeping the plenary speakers in the morning and the missionary sharing times in the evenings.

One issue that was never adequately resolved by either the Worker Retreat or the MESA format was the fact that some missionaries were never on furlough in the summer. The result was that those missionaries often attended the event only once, just prior to their first term of service. Several attempts were made to organize a fall or winter MESA event, but without success. In-country worker retreats were introduced in countries with significant numbers of workers to help meet the need for fellowship and team building. However, the lack of home office staff or board members at these events kept them from being a significant forum for in-service training or strategic planning.

As a corrective to this situation, and to provide a more adequate international forum for building strategic mission vision on each continent, I worked with Ron Penner, Director for Personnel, to envision a new series of continental retreat and consultation events. The concept was approved by the Board in 2003, and just after my departure as General Director, the first of these, known as TRAC for "Thailand Retreat and Consultation" was held in Asia. It included the participation of all MBMSI missionaries in Asia, some administrative staff and board members from North America, some pastors of North American churches supporting mission in Asia, and leaders of MB conferences in Asia. A second such event was held in Bogotá, Colombia in September of 2005, focusing on missionaries, national leaders, and programs in Latin America. Similar events had been projected for Africa and Europe, but with the emergence of the ICOMB Global Mission Alliance, these plans may undergo further revision.

Staffing for care and retention has also been enhanced in the past

decade. In January of 1999, Ron Penner was appointed as the first full-time Director for Personnel Services. In addition to the usual processing of applications of new candidates, the maintenance of personnel records, oversight of orientation and training, and the management of worker debriefing sessions, he would have an important worker care component. While it was recognized that the Regional Program Directors had the primary administrative relationship with missionaries with respect to their ministry and support needs, Ron would focus on personal care needs of the missionaries. This included medical and psychological issues, including help in the resolution of conflict that might arise while on the field. Ron's missionary experience in both Spain and Mexico, plus earlier pastoral experience were a significant asset in this role. In the transition of the main office to Abbotsford in 2004, a new staff member with missionary experience, Ray Harms-Wiebe, assumed many aspects of this role with the title of Team Leader for Training and Team Health.

Chapter Five

OPPORTUNITY AND CHALLENGE IN SHORT-TERM MISSION

In the early years of MB mission, those who heard the call to overseas mission often expected it to be their lifetime commitment. Though length of missionary service was cut short by serious illness or even death on the field for some, others continued in service for 30, 40, or more years. When the retirement age was fixed at 65 in the early 1960s, provision was added for the "Retiree Volunteer Program" which allowed those retired missionaries to return to the field for one-year terms of service beyond retirement. Thus one of the earliest short-term mission programs of MBM/S was actually an appendix to a long career of missionary service.

But the call for opportunities for short-term service was broader than just the continuation of retired long-term missionaries. In the spring of 1966, the staff report to the Board included this statement:

> From various areas we are asked about our policy regarding short term service. There are those who would like to go out under Board assignment for a period of two to three years. Then schools suggest that we arrange to have students come to the field on a summer assignment so that they might become involved in our mission program. We need the Board's reaction to this development (Report, 19).

In the minutes of that same meeting, the Board went on record as approving in principle a new missionary aid program. It was noted that this service would have a two-fold purpose of recruiting as well as meeting needs, and that participants would pay their own expenses to and from the field (Minutes, 34). This program eventually became known by the acronym MAP (Missionary Assistance Program). Over the next two decades, many young people went out under this label to help long-term missionaries with ESL classes or other routine tasks. Many went for a term of 6 to 12 weeks in the summer, but some stayed for a semester or even a full school term.

A somewhat parallel program was operating through the decade of the 1970s and 1980s known as Summer Service. This program sent out teams of young people. They were often formed by our MB Bible Schools or colleges and sent for three to six-week service assignments in locations where MBM/S had long-term missionaries. We hosted a number of such summer service groups during our years in Panama, including students from Tabor College, Bethany Bible Institute, and Columbia Bible Institute. Others participated in the MBM/S summer service program by placement on teams formed by other agencies such as LIFE ministries and OM.

In 1966, the largest short term service program of Mennonite Brethren, known as Christian Service, was brought under MBM/S administration by the merger of the two boards referred to in chapter two. I have noted that this was when Helen and I became officially a part of the MBM/S team, as we were already teaching in Colombia. At the time of the merger, there were also many Christian Service workers in Canada and the United States. That domestic portion of this program was transferred to Area Conferences in 1978, but through the overseas portion, MBM/S continued to send out many teachers and others for two-year overseas assignments well into the 1980s. It was a wonderful opportunity for Mennonite Brethren young adults, many with a college degree, to serve abroad while both broadening their cross-cultural understandings and their knowledge of MB missions.

From 1973 into the 1980s, a number of other opportunities for short-term mission service were introduced by MBM/S. The Good News Corps was established to form teams of "under-30 people who will be called and sent around the world as a primary strike force in believers-church-planting evangelism" (Kasdorf, 469). Teams were sent to Paraguay, Brazil, and Colombia. Those who joined the Corps were asked to raise half their support from their home church. Within six years, several of the GNC participants had been appointed as long-term missionaries under MBM/S. During the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the program name was changed to Good News Interns (GNI) with singles or couples often going out without a larger team. It was also more deliberately focused on being an internship for possible long term service to follow. The Fraternal Visitor Program provided opportunities for mature adults with special skills and experience to serve our overseas MB churches and their institutions for periods of one to six months.

Victor Adrian, my predecessor, had a vision to see active North American pastors and Bible teachers serve in overseas mission settings as a way of stimulating their mission vision and involvement. When a Canadian businessman made a major donation for this purpose in 1990, the Pastors Overseas Program (POP) was born. The local church or school where the participant served was expected to affirm their involvement by giving them time off for this ministry. The POP fund covered the travel cost of the participant, while the sponsoring entity was invited to cover the travel cost for a spouse. I took over the administration of this program in 1991, and over the next decade I was able to use this fund to help send some 30 pastors and teachers overseas. Many of them served as special resource speakers at in-country worker retreats for our missionaries. The average length of their trip was from ten days to three weeks.

As participants in the POP program some professors from our MB colleges and seminary served missionaries and also provided seminars for national church leaders through translation. In time, this concept was expanded to develop the International Teacher Exchange program. With volunteer leadership given by retired seminary professor and former Board Secretary, Elmer Martens, this program has facilitated teaching assignments of a month or more for numerous North American faculty members. The counterpart of bringing overseas professors to our churches and schools has been less successful.

Youth Mission Canada had been formed in the early 1980s to help the Canadian Board of Evangelism in its intensive church planting thrust. Teams of college-age young adults were formed and sent to assist in a variety of locations, especially in eastern Canada. The program usually lasted for six to eight weeks, including orientation and debriefing. In 1991, then General Secretary Victor Adrian began negotiations with the director of Youth Mission Canada, Randy Friesen, for MBM/S to provide some overseas locations for placement of such teams, working alongside our long-term missionaries. In May 1991, agreement was reached to have the US Board of Evangelism join in this program as well, with domestic teams being placed in Canada and the US. By 1992, teams were also placed overseas with both Canadian and US young adults participating (Board Minutes, May 1991, 12). Although the program and staff were still administered by the Canadian Board

of Evangelism, the other two agencies now each provided 25% of the cost of Randy's salary. The first overseas teams of what became known as Youth Mission International were sent to Panama and Russia in the summer of 1992.

In 1994, a working agreement was reached to have representatives of three agencies form a Commission to oversee the operations of YMI. The YMI Commission would consist of two representatives each from the Canadian Board of Evangelism, the US Board of Evangelism, and MBM/S. YMI continued to operate under this arrangement for the next five years, and made significant expansion of its programs. In addition to the college-age summer teams, which became known by the acronym ACTION, it added a short program for high school youth known as SOAR.

The rapid expansion of the program produced some strains in the partnership, especially as larger and larger amounts of budgeted funding were required to support the growing staff and overhead costs of YMI. In 1997, a longer nine-month program known as TREK was started, based in Abbotsford. It was hoped that this could become an internship for long-term overseas service. However, the US Conference began raising questions about its suitability for its own interns, because it was located in Canada and was mostly sending participants overseas. With conversation about the possible dissolution of the General Conference on the horizon, the MBM/S Board had gone on record in 1996 as favoring a clearly defined single home for YMI, rather than continuing the three-agency working agreement.

That negotiation would take nearly three years before we could find consensus on this issue. After many hours of meetings, Youth Mission International was merged with MBMSI on September 1, 1999. Its staff and programs would now operate under the authority of the MBMSI Board, but with a special Youth Mission Commission added to the board structure to provide support and counsel. With this move, a new era of short-term mission was initiated within the MBMSI structure and budget. Randy Friesen, as Director for Youth Mission, became a member of the MBMSI Administrative Council. A few years later, Randy was asked to take responsibility for the whole range of short-term mission opportunities through MBMSI as Director for Short Term Mission. The integration of short-term service with the goals of long-term mission

now became a major topic for the strategic planning sessions of the staff of MBMS International.

Meanwhile, another stream of short term mission had also come under the MBM/S umbrella. Church Partnership Evangelism had been launched by the King Road MB Church in Abbotsford under the leadership of one of their members, Peter Loewen. Peter had participated in this type of door to door evangelism program with a Christian Missionary Alliance professor and a Peruvian pastor. He then felt called to develop a similar approach for Mennonite Brethren, starting in his home congregation. His business and foundation provided much of the funding for CPE. When the program grew bigger than the King Road mission committee could adequately oversee, Peter approached me and asked that MBM/S provide an umbrella for the program. We agreed to do that and signed a formal working agreement in 1994.

CPE grew rapidly and by the year 2000 was sending out over 40 teams per year with about 15-25 people on each team. The approach was to pair up a North American CPE participant with a local church believer in the receiving location. The pair would then go door to door, with the local person presenting the written testimony of the North American visitor in the local language. In each case, an invitation was then given for the person being visited to pray to receive Christ. A large majority of those visited prayed the prayer. However, with the large number of teams, it became increasingly difficult to track the follow up of the campaigns to see how many of those people were active in a local church one year later. Also, under the loose accountability of the working agreement, there was some concern about adequate documentation of the financial operations of what had become a very large program.

After much discussion and several failed attempts to bring CPE fully within the accountability structure of MBMSI, a merger agreement was ratified in 2003. James Nikkel, who had earlier served the Canadian Conference as its evangelism director, was named as the new Director of the program. There were, however, some legal concerns from the original creators of this approach at the Christian and Missionary Alliance Church. To resolve the concerns, we changed the name of our program to Disciple Making International or DMI. At this point the large financial subsidies that had earlier come from the founder were no longer available. However, the program has continued with a somewhat

more modest schedule of campaigns. It has also sought to focus more intentionally on evangelism that assists church planting in areas where MBMSI has long term programs.

In the early 1990s, several earlier short-term programs were consolidated in a category which was somewhat similar to the earlier MAP opportunities. The Global Volunteers category focused on sending individuals or small groups for short periods of "hands-on mission". For example, it facilitated sending people to help build church buildings in Peru, Colombia, Brazil, and Lithuania. In 2002, it was again modified to Global Action Partners (GAP) and focused on sending out individuals and local church teams for brief periods of overseas exposure and service. Orientation and debriefing are provided by the area office staff of MBMSI.

With the major structural changes that have occurred following my departure as General Director, it is clear that more change is ahead in terms of MBMSI short-term mission as well. The use of the YMI acronym has been downplayed, while the SOAR, ACTION, and TREK programs continue in some form. Efforts are being made to give the first of these a more regional flavor, as SOAR Heartland has primarily served Manitoba churches, while SOAR Ensenada in April 2006 was planned primarily by Pacific District MB churches. Two of the ACTION teams that went out in the summer of 2005 were primarily composed of students from Tabor College and Fresno Pacific University.

Looking back at 40 years of short-term mission opportunities within the MBMSI structure, some changes stand out. The most obvious is the tremendous reduction in the time period that was understood to be "short-term." The largest program in the late 1960s and the 1970s was Christian Service, which normally covered a two-year period. The largest program in 2004-2005 was the SOAR program, which normally lasted two weeks or less. And of course, there has been a general reduction in the age of participants. Many, if not most, Christian Service workers were college graduates. SOAR and ACTION participants are mostly high school and college students. On the other hand, the newly announced TREK 3 program, mentioned in chapter four, would appear to parallel in many ways the earlier GNC and GNI opportunities for a three-year internship in mission.

Chapter Six

ANABAPTIST AND EVANGELICAL COOPERATION IN MISSION

When MB missionaries from North America were first sent to India, they went out under the oversight of the American Baptist mission. When the H.C. Bartels, members of the KMB church, went to China in 1901, they did so under the China Mennonite Mission, with support from several Mennonite groups including MB churches. Over the next several decades, several attempts were made to invite the KMB missionaries to go out through the MB Board of Foreign Mission. That goal of inter-Mennonite cooperation was finally reached when the two conferences merged in 1960. However, cooperation in mission with other Mennonite groups was not always a priority in the early decades of our MB conference mission efforts. Since there were separate conferences in North America, each board established its own field of ministry in India, China, the Congo, and elsewhere. Thus separate Anabaptist conferences were formed in those countries as well.

In recent decades, Mennonite Brethren in the United States were part of the National Association of Evangelicals, and MBM/S became a founding member of the Evangelical Foreign Mission Association. This provided opportunity for mission staff to interact and strategize together with other evangelical mission leaders. From 1985 through 2003, I found that participation in the annual EFMA Mission Executive's Retreat was a great opportunity to learn what other mission agencies were doing and to be encouraged by what God was doing through a variety of agencies. For many years, MBM/S was the only Mennonite agency active in the EFMA. More recently, some others have also joined the fellowship.

During my tenure as General Director, I was an active participant in the AD 2000 movement. Led by Luis Bush, this movement was instrumental in helping mission leaders from North America and from the rest of the world to focus more intensely on the evangelization of the least reached people groups. For me, a highlight of my participation in the movement was the Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE) held in Seoul, Korea, in 1995. Randy Friesen, my succes-

sor in leading MBMSI, also participated in the event. With some 4,000 delegates attending, it was a milestone in focusing the attention of the global church on the unfinished task of mission, as highlighted by the "10-40 Window" concept.

A huge step toward greater cooperation in mission was taken at GCOWE by the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptists. I had come in contact with Southern Baptist missions during our first overseas assignment in Colombia. While they had a large missionary team in Colombia and significant resources, they usually stood by themselves, even choosing not to participate in the "Evangelism in Depth" program that came to Colombia in 1968. But at GCOWE in 1995, the leader of the Southern Baptist mission board publicly apologized to a gathering of some 200 North American mission leaders. He acknowledged the need to work together in God's mission and to encourage one another by sharing resources when possible. He then distributed copies of a massive database on least-reached peoples, on which their mission board had invested millions of dollars. Later that year, the Southern Baptist mission joined the EFMA for the first time, thus giving a tremendous boost to evangelical cooperation in mission. In line with their more cooperative stance, their missionaries were most helpful in assisting our Team 2000 during a research trip I made with them in Thailand in 1999.

Cooperation between Mennonite groups in mission has also grown over the past three decades. Perhaps most instrumental in promoting this growth has been the Council of International Anabaptist Ministries, best known by the acronym CIM. MBM/S had become a part of CIM in the 1970s. Through the networks that resulted, cooperative mission efforts by Mennonites in which MBM/S participated were begun in Indonesia, in Lithuania, and among the African Independent Churches or AIC's in southern Africa.

I attended my first meeting of CIM in 1982, while still a missionary in Panama. It was out of that meeting that an agreement was born to establish a new Anabaptist extension seminary in Central America, known as SEMILLA. It would be a cooperative effort funded by several of the CIM agencies and serving the training needs of several Central American conferences. Our MB conference in Panama was a founding member of the program and many of its leaders have received training through its courses. Then, in 1992, MBM/S appointed Juan and Olga

Martinez as missionaries and sent them to Guatemala where Juan served as the Director for SEMILLA for eight years.

Another major cooperative effort in Mennonite mission grew out of a request that came to CIM in 1989 from Mexico City. The Franconia Mennonite Mission had been working there for 20 years and had planted 5 small churches. They called for help to plant more churches in what was becoming the world's largest city with over twenty million people,. MBM/S, along with five other Anabaptist agencies in CIM, agreed to work together and formed the Coalition for Anabaptist Missions in Mexico (CAMM). A parallel partnership was formed called the Committee for United Mission by Anabaptists or CUMA. This partnership made a commitment of ten years of cooperative church planting in the world's largest city. As a result, by 1999, five additional churches had been planted with some reaching well over 200 in attendance, and growing.

Following my appointment as MBM/S General Director, I served terms as both Vice-Chair and as Chair of the CIM Executive Committee. The relationships established through participation in the CIM network of mission executives also became the basis for broader dialogue regarding inter-Mennonite cooperation in mission. During the days of the Mennonite World Conference Assembly in Calcutta in 1997, a number of us were impressed by the missional fervor being expressed by the delegations from two-thirds world conferences. In conversations I had there with Richard Showalter of Eastern Mennonite Missions, we began to dream about the potential for a global Anabaptist mission consultation. It would be a forum for discussion of the unfinished task and a place to form new partnerships in mission by various groups within the global Mennonite family. This led to a proposal that was presented and approved at the January 1998 meeting of CIM in Chicago. I became part of a six-member planning team for this event, with three representatives from MWC and three from CIM.

The event itself became known as GAMCO and was held in Guatemala City in February 2000. MBMS International sent several representatives, including staff members, board members, and two missionaries. The event was held in the context of the meeting of the General Council of MWC. Thus, in addition to the specific mission focused delegates from many conferences, many of whom had received travel subsidies through a CIM grant, the regular conference leadership delegates of the

MWC General Council were present. This made for some interesting dialogue and even for some tension at various points during the five-day event. The debate mostly centered on trying to define what activities or ministries of the church should be defined as mission. In the end, a findings committee presented a resolution which could not gain full approval from the delegation. However, the GAMCO planning committee of which I had been a part then met and agreed to form a continuation committee that would continue the process.

Over the next three years that continuation committee, which included Mennonite Brethren representatives from Germany and Congo, met twice, in Germany and Zimbabwe, and developed a proposal to form a Global Mission Fellowship of Anabaptists. This proposal was processed within our Board as well as within the network of CIM. In the context of the MWC Assembly in Zimbabwe in August 2003, MBMS International became a founding member of the GMF, when the charter was signed by our Director of Programs, Tim Bergdahl. It remains to be seen how active MBMSI will be in this fellowship, especially in view of the formation of the strictly MB Global Mission Alliance by ICOMB in 2005.

Finally, I want to reflect on some events of 2000-2004 that for me represent a full-circle pilgrimage for the Mennonite Brethren as a missionary movement. This relates to our return to do mission in the Ukraine. One should recall that the MB Church began in the Ukraine as a renewal and missionary movement within the broader Mennonite Church. What began as internal renewal became a new evangelical Anabaptist denomination in 1860 when a small group were rebaptized and began to meet separately. From that small beginning, the denomination known as Mennonite Brethren spread through immigration and missionary activity until its unique identity as a family of faith was present in over 20 countries by the year 2002.

During the decade of the 1990s, a number of Mennonite mission and service agencies, including MBM/S, made contacts and sponsored a variety of ministries in the newly independent Ukraine. For MBM/S, the primary channel was through the Church Partnership Evangelism program. Mission efforts by our partner in Germany, LOGOS International, and by the Canadian Mennonites resulted in some emerging church plants. Dialogue through the CIM network resulted in a meeting

of these three agencies, held in Germany in early February of 2003. The purpose of the meeting was to explore the possibility of close cooperation in planting Mennonite churches in the Ukraine. The result was an agreement to seek to form a single evangelical Mennonite umbrella conference in the Ukraine, with the ICOMB Confession of Faith as its foundation.

In April of 2004, representatives of the three mission agencies met again, together with leaders of the four emerging churches in the Ukraine. After fellowship, teaching, and dialogue, the group reached agreement to form the single conference. Mennonite Brethren had officially returned to do mission in the Ukraine and would do so not in isolation, but rather as part of a larger Mennonite family of faith. Since that agreement was signed, evangelism efforts by MBMSI continue through our DMI teams, and at least one new church plant is emerging in the Crimea region of the Ukraine.

Chapter Seven

PRINCIPLES, PRIORITIES, POLICIES, AND STRATEGIES

As mentioned earlier, the Mennonite Brethren movement was born with a vision for mission. Here in North America, the charter of the formal Mission Union formed in Kansas in 1900 included a statement of four purposes, the first of which read: "To bring and to preach through missionaries the gospel to all nations without the gospel of Christ in home and foreign lands" (Peters, 216). Thus it was clear from the beginning that MB missions would focus on taking the gospel to those who didn't have it—those who today have become known as the unreached or least-reached people groups.

The first more extensive statement of Guiding Principles and Field Policies was published by the Board of Foreign Missions in 1947. It underwent two revisions in the early 1960s. Then, with the merger of the Board of Foreign Missions with the Board of General Welfare and Public Relations in 1966, MBM/S went through a period of realignment as efforts were made to integrate the former mandates of those two boards. This was also a period of significant changes in the various fields of ministry where our missionaries were working. National churches were growing and maturing and in most cases were now in the hands of national leadership. Institutions that had been created and nurtured by missionaries were now facing the challenge of sustainability without the continuing massive infusion of North American finances.

In response to these many changes, the Board of Missions and Services commissioned missiologist Paul Hiebert to draft a new statement of Mission Principles and Policies which was first presented to the Board in 1976. After a period of discussion and refinement, it was approved and was first distributed to missionaries in August 1977 at the Worker Retreat in which Helen and I participated, just prior to our departure for Panama. This statement of mission principles focused five theological positions starting with the statement that "We are called to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God" (Mission Principles and Policies, 7). It gave as the first of three priorities, the "building of Christ-like,

self-propagating churches." The other two encompassed a ministry to human needs and the support of ministries such as Bible translation and leadership training.

While that 1977 booklet continued to guide the work of MBM/S missionaries for nearly 20 years, changes overseas and in mission leadership led to further statements regarding the goals of MB mission. In March of 1980, a statement entitled "Mennonite Brethren Missions in the 1980s" was adopted by the board, focusing some of the new directions in MB mission for that decade. Then, after the appointment of Victor Adrian as General Secretary in 1983, a new statement of "Goals for the 90s" was prepared and adopted by the board in October 1989. Perhaps its strongest statement was a reaffirmation of the centrality of evangelism and church planting in the efforts of MBM/S to reach the lost. It also reaffirmed the importance of leadership training and social ministries as a part of ministry to the whole person. Further, it included a clear statement on "internationalization," calling for both international missionary teams and international mission administrators. It was presented to the General Conference convention in Hillsboro in October 1990, and approved under the title, "Vision for the Future: Goals for the 90s." However, because this statement did not include any of the detailed guidelines of previous policy documents, the 1977 version of Principles and Policies continued to be given to new missionaries as a part of their orientation.

When I was appointed as General Director in 1991, I expressed my concern that MBM/S had continued to expand its fields of ministry into more and more countries without perhaps giving adequate attention to the goals and effectiveness of the work it was doing in other countries. The Board went on record in October of that year to initiate an overall evaluation process of our program. After some initial discussion, the Board appointed a task force to review our entry and exit practices and to formulate an instrument for the evaluation of our fields. By 1993, the instrument and guidelines had been approved and the evaluations were begun. An evaluator was chosen for each country, usually from outside of the MBM/S team. The evaluator interviewed missionaries, staff, and board members, including a visit on the field to see the ministry first-hand. A report with recommendations was then presented to the Board for study, discussion, and preliminary decisions. A follow-up visit by a

staff and board member was common practice for processing the results with missionaries and national church partners. By 1999, a review of our work in most countries had been completed and a second round of evaluations was initiated.

In September 1994, I was appointed as part of a five-person task force to update and integrate the older Principles and Policies statement with the Goal's for the 90s document. A three-year process followed which included international consultation with a broad range of MB leaders regarding the potential refocusing of our mission priorities. This included a review of the following: 1) our balance of program involvements between evangelism, leadership training, and social ministries; 2) the balance of our geographic involvements; and 3) the comparative investment in efforts to reach the unreached and those focused on support of older conference partnerships (Board Minutes, September 1994, 4, 94-F-3).

During the course of this study I, along with Randy Friesen, then director of YMI and now my successor as General Director, participated in the Global Consultation on World Evangelization (GCOWE) event in Korea, mentioned in an earlier chapter. Sponsored by the AD 2000 movement, it highlighted the need to focus our pioneer church planting efforts on the geographic region known as the 10-40 Window. With over 4,000 delegates coming from some 180 countries, it also visually demonstrated the fact that the church was now global and that the whole church was called to engage in mission.

During the course of our study, the Board made some significant decisions that would shift many of our priorities for the decade 1995-2005. By March of 1996, the draft of a new document entitled "Global Mission Guidelines: Vision, Priorities and Strategies for Century 21" (or GMG) was approved by the Executive Committee of the Board and some of the proposed changes were already under way. This was followed by full Board affirmation later that year and its presentation to the General Conference convention in Waterloo as a part of the Year of Global Mission in 1997.

Perhaps most notable in presenting the changes that would be carried out over a decade were a set of two graphs in the GMG brochure. They outlined the priority shifts in terms of budget to be allocated to geographic regions and to specific ministry functions.

The goals with regard to ministry function for the period 1995-2005 included the following:

1. That administrative overhead remain at 12-15%.
2. That budget for direct evangelism be reduced from 45% to about 35%.
3. That budget for training national leaders be increased from 8% to 15-20%.
4. That we aim to budget 5-7% of resources for social ministry.

(Board Minutes, March 1996, 8, 96-S-18).

Once the Global Mission Guidelines were ratified by the General Conference in convention, they also became the primary vehicle for the orientation of our new missionaries regarding the priorities and direction of MBMS International.

The shift of funding from Latin America to Asia was closely related to the goal of giving higher priority to sending missionaries to do pioneer church planting among the least reached people groups. Many of those peoples live in the so-called 10-40 window which includes major portions of Asia and northern Africa. Thus, during the decade from 1995-2005, we sent fewer new missionaries to Latin America. We also began to phase out the high levels of financial subsidies that had been in place to support national church initiatives in the Latin American conferences. These shifts in some cases put a strain on the partnership relationships between MBMSI and the conferences and were especially challenging for our Regional Program Directors during this period, Harold Siebert and Miguel Forero. However, Miguel's standing as a cultural insider was especially helpful in encouraging the conferences to develop their own resources.

The increase in funding for Asia would result in new missionary teams for Thailand and for north India, where several least-reached people groups would become the focus of new church planting efforts. It also meant the extension and expansion of our partnership with the PIPKA mission board in Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim country.

Another significant development as a result of the renewed focus on the unreached was the development of the MBMSI Muslim Ministry Team (MMT). Already prior to 1995, MBM/S had placed missionaries

in areas where their focus was on ministry to Muslims. This was true in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and for a time in south-central India. But in March 1996, the board took two significant steps that would expand our ministry to the world of Islam. First was the appointment of Gordon Nickel, former missionary in Pakistan but now living in Canada, as a Resource Missionary to the Muslim World (Board Minutes, March 96, 4, 96-S-8).

Second was the affirmation of a new strategy with three major components:

1. A focus on Muslims as a cultural/religious people group rather than thinking only in terms of geographic locations.
2. The inclusion of North America in this new paradigm along with other ongoing opportunities to reach Muslims in Africa, Asia, and Europe.
3. The formation of a "Muslim Ministry/Training Team" that may include traditional missionaries, vocational missionaries, non-resident missionaries, and partner conference workers (Board Minutes, March 96, 9, 96-S-19).

In October of 1997, the new team was further strengthened by the appointment of Samir and Lewiza Youssef.

The formation of missionary church planting teams has also been a matter for significant testing and growth over the past two decades. Already in the 1970s, the launching of the Good News Corps was viewed as a team approach to church planting. Perhaps the best evidence of its effectiveness would be in Paraguay where the Thrust Evangelism teams were able to plant a significant number of new churches.

When I became Latin America Secretary in 1985, I was told of the recent Board mandate for Urban Team Ministry (UTM) in Brazil and Colombia. With a goal of developing self-supporting and self-propagating churches in urban centers, the strategy had been described as follows: "To place a team of workers who understand themselves to be called of God, and are trained in urban ministries, in a selected urban area to serve cooperatively with a variety of gifts dedicated to the common purpose of achieving the above goal" (Board Minutes, May 1985, 3, 4).

I began immediately to look for candidates to form these teams in

Medellin, Bogotá, and Sao Paulo. Later, I also sought candidates for a new team in Guadalajara. Over a period of several years, three or four missionary couples were recruited, prepared, and sent out to each of those cities. However, they were for the most part "strangers" to each other and were expected to form a team on the field. A variety of factors kept most of them from developing effective team relationships and strategies. Many team members returned to North America after one or two terms of service. The exception, and perhaps the most successful of these Urban Teams, was that of Bogotá, which over a period of ten years developed a multiplying church movement in that city.

In early 1998, a new strategy for church planting team formation began to take shape. A younger generation of potential new missionaries had experienced models of team ministry in short-term service with groups like YWAM or YMI. One of those persons, Karen Huebert-Sanchez, approached me with a vision to form such a team for church planting ministry in Thailand. The idea was to discern a group of at least three couples who would train together and then be sent out together for a pioneer ministry. I agreed to process such an approach with our MBMSI Board, providing that the team would also make a commitment to at least ten years of service. Our earlier experiences in Latin America, including our positive outcome in Bogotá, had convinced me that anything less would not likely result in a lasting church planting movement.

After further processing, I took the proposal to the MBMSI Board in April of 1998. Their approval of the following resolution began a strategic shift that continues to impact MBMSI church planting strategy: "Carried to authorize the General Director and his staff to move forward with planning and recruitment that will lead to the sending of new "church planting teams" of approximately 5 to 7 adults each, particularly, to the 10-40 Window, during the 1999-2005 period" (Board Minutes, April 98, 5, 98-S-4). Team 2000, consisting of three families, was appointed in October of 1999 and is now approaching their ten-year commitment in Chonburi, Thailand. A significant church planting movement is emerging through their efforts for which we give thanks to God. Team Delhi, also consisting of three families, was appointed in 2004 and was sent for ministry in India. Other similar teams are being projected for other locations.

At the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned the four-fold purpose

statement that was part of the original charter of our mission agency. As part of our work on the Global Mission Guidelines, I led a process to develop a concise new mission statement that would express our purpose in contemporary terms. The result was the following: "The mission of MBMS International is to participate in making disciples of all people groups, sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ cross-culturally and globally, in Spirit-empowered obedience to Christ's Commission and in partnership with local Mennonite Brethren churches."

The logo of the agency also underwent a variety of changes during this period. A cross had been part of several versions and thus when a new logo featuring the acronym "MBM/S" was approved in 1986, it included a cross superimposed on a globe, but some felt it looked more like a basketball! When the new mission statement was approved, we were heading into the Year of Global Mission emphasis in 1997. Thus a new stylized logo was also designed which featured a planter sowing seeds on a globe. Some complained that it did not have an overt cross, but mostly the response was positive. The logo also carried the imprint, "Making disciples through global mission."

Just prior to ending my tenure as General Director, the Board embarked on another evaluation of both our structure and purpose. The rather extensive structural changes that were suggested were left for my successor, Randy Friesen, to review, prior to implementation. However, a new shorter mission statement was adopted in October of 2003. It states, "In response to Christ's Great Commission, MBMS International works with Mennonite Brethren churches to make disciples and plant churches globally." The stylized logo, adopted for the Year of Global Mission in 1997 remained the same, but in 2005 the byline on the logo was changed to "holistic church planting that transforms communities."

Chapter Eight

CHANGES IN CHURCH RELATIONS

The Global Mission Guidelines document begins with this statement:

> "Mennonite Brethren Missions/Services is the agency charged with carrying on those church ministries which cross cultural boundaries, and is the only instrument for doing so which is solely responsible to the Mennonite Brethren churches in USA and Canada."

As the mission arm of the denomination's churches in North America, MBMSI has historically been almost totally dependent on those local churches for both the funding to carry on its work and for the people it sent out as missionaries. For the first decade of existence, the American Mennonite Brethren Mission Union legal structure was equivalent to the conference. Then ten years later, the Foreign Mission Board formed within the conference was chosen from key leaders in the churches. And while MBM/S was increasingly seen as an agency in the last decades of the 20th century, its core support still came from local MB churches. Loyalty to "our mission" was still a characteristic of most of the older churches when I came back from Colombia in 1968. People eagerly read the stories from the field that were printed in the denominational periodicals and were anxious to have missionaries home on furlough to visit and report in their Sunday services.

But by the time I came to the mission office in 1985, things had begun to change in the relationship of MBM/S to our North American churches. Many of the newly planted congregations, especially in Canada, had a variety of connections with other "non-denominational" or "parachurch" mission agencies. Missionary slide shows no longer captured the attention they once did, especially since international jet travel now meant that many in the congregations had traveled overseas. Many pastors tended to guard their Sunday pulpit and, with evening services now smaller or even non-existent, missionary reporting was more of a challenge. Even the denominational periodicals seemed less willing to print all of the news releases being sent from the MBM/S office.

As a response to these and other changes, we entered two decades of major change in the way MBMSI has related to its MB constituency in North America. Those changes affected the areas of communications and media, constituency ministries, and models of mission funding.

Communications and Media

From the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, the number of MBM/S News Releases was increased and some mission inserts for local church bulletins were produced. However, since the conference periodicals were unable to give enough space to mission news on a regular basis, Victor Adrian introduced an expansion of mission news to the constituency. In September 1985, the first issue of a four-page newsletter called "Mennonite Brethren in World Mission" was distributed to prayer partners and churches. Then in January 1987, the first issue of a new twelve-page MBM/S mission magazine began circulation by direct mail into every MB home in North America on a bi-monthly basis. It was called *Witness*, and represented a significant new investment of resources by MBM/S in mission communication. However, it was perceived by some as moving MBM/S more toward being an agency separate from the conference. An attempt to counter this perception was made in 1991-92, when the *Witness* magazine became an insert in the conference periodicals, first in the *Christian Leader* in the United States, and later in the *Mennonite Brethren Herald* in Canada.

Having our own access to MB homes with the magazine also meant that we could present a variety of needs directly to the members of our churches. Thus some issues of *Witness* featured a prayer directory of our missionaries, while others focused the openings for new missionaries and the need for financial support. For the first 11 years, the magazine was printed in a two-color format. But as a part of preparations for the 1997 "Year of Global Mission," a 12-month full-color wall calendar was released in late 1996. It was well received and was repeated in late 1997 and 1998. The communication impact of the full-color photos on the calendars also led to a decision in late 1998 to expand the magazine to 16 pages with four of those, including the cover, being in full color.

Small brochures were another means used by MBM/S to educate the members of MB churches about their denominational mission agency. A "flagship brochure" was printed for the General Conference of 1984

that featured a centerfold map of the 23 countries in which MBM/S had programs. For the 1997 Year of Global Mission, it was updated and reworked into a full-color format. As early as 1951, the desire of constituents to have a directory of Mennonite Brethren missionaries led to the publication of the *Missionary Album*. It contained a photo and biographical sketch of each missionary serving under the Board of Foreign Missions. It was updated approximately every two years. By the time I came to the office in 1985, it had become known as the "Worker Directory," featuring mostly photos and addresses for communication.

After I became General Director, the concept behind the Worker Directory was expanded to include three annual directories. The directory listing our missionaries became known as the "PEOPLE Book" and was distributed annually as a guide to prayer and communication, mostly through local churches. Two parallel directories were added to create an annual series. The "PROJECT Guide" became a listing and description of a variety of options for designated giving. The annual "RESOURCE Guide" contained a listing and description of the various mission media resources available from the MBMSI offices for use by small groups and local churches.

I should also mention the three books directly sponsored by MBM/S during the last 20 years of this period to help communicate the story of Mennonite Brethren missions. The first, entitled *They Saw His Glory: Stories of Conversion and Service*, was published in 1984 as part of the first "Centennial Celebration" of MB mission. The stories were written by 8 young MBM/S volunteer writers who traveled to 11 countries of Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America during 1982-83. Their personal interviews of MB Christians in these countries became the basis for the stories in the book. It was edited by Byron Burkholder, then serving as Information Services Secretary for MBM/S.

The second book, published by MBM/S in 1990, was the product of the first Mennonite Brethren World Mission Conference held in Curitiba, Brazil in February 1988. Edited by Victor Adrian and Don Loewen of the MBM/S Secretariat, it is entitled *Committed to World Mission: A Focus on International Strategy*. This book contains the text of the four plenary addresses given at the conference. It also contains material from the 25 workshops that were presented at the conference, along with some summary thoughts about the impact of the conference, written by its two editors.

The third book, entitled *True Life: First Hand Stories of Mission*, was published in 2000 as part of the second celebration of the MBMS International centennial. It was designed as a "coffee table book" with many large full-color photos as well as black and white photos from the mission archives. It also contains many short stories of first-hand missionary experiences written by the MBMSI missionaries who experienced them. In addition to these MBMSI sponsored books, a variety of other MB missionary biographies and autobiographies have also been published by other entities. Many of those are listed in the bibliography.

As mentioned earlier, for several decades the means used by missionaries on furlough to share their mission stories in pictures was by the projection of slide shows. While quite effective for many years, it became clear that other media were needed in an age of television to effectively communicate the mission story. Thus in 1980 a filmmaker from Winnipeg came to Panama and produced a 32-minute motion picture about the work among the Wounaan people called "People of the River." It was widely used, and by 1985 the Board had asked staff to explore the production of several more films. However, the high cost of movie production put that project on the shelf. In 1986 a decision was made to purchase "dissolve units" to extend the life of the old slide shows for another decade.

Rapid changes in technology also brought further major changes to the mission media used by MBMSI during the past decade. As costs for video production became more manageable, we became a partner in the new Multi-media Arts Center at Fresno Pacific University in Fresno. This allowed MBMSI missionaries to take video footage of their work while on the field, and then to have it edited and produced into a focused and impacting VHS video to use during their deputation ministry. Multiple copies were also produced and made available to small groups and churches from the MBMSI offices. As General Director, I also produced a series of four "Global Mission Update" videos on broader mission topics. A fifth video in the series focused on "Unreached Peoples" was completed in late 2004, just after the end of my tenure as General Director. As computer editing software became more user friendly and less expensive, both the office and missionary teams have begun to produce their video presentations in DVD format.

The other major technology change that has affected mission communication and media is the advent of the internet, making both email and web sites accessible globally. I introduced the use of email for inter-office communication early in my tenure as General Director. Then by 1995 we were using it to communicate with our missionaries and, in 1996, our Communications and Media Director, Craig Hallman, created our first MBM/S website. Both communication tools have continued to expand in usage. Today, nearly all communications with missionaries, both from the office and from churches and individual constituents, is done by email. The MBMSI website has continually been updated and today includes a web page for each missionary, where they can post their prayer requests, photos, and even short video clips of their work.

Constituency Ministries

In 1967 the Board reaffirmed its policy that missionaries on furlough should give a portion of their furloughs to deputation. The Board had engaged A.J. Neufeld as a Minister of Deputation, to augment the availability of mission speakers. The length of missionary terms was also adjusted to provide opportunity for shorter terms on the field and thus more frequent personal contact by MBM/S missionaries with the supporting constituency. In Neufeld's report to the Board in May 1967, he wrote, "There is a vital interest and concern for missions in many areas of our brotherhood, [but] we must also state that there are areas where interest is lagging. Often this is the result of a lack of information on our total missionary outreach. Information on our organizational as well as on world-wide program is responsively received."

By the early 1980s, it had become clear that greater contact of our missionaries with the constituency was needed in order to keep our churches informed and engaged with the work of MBM/S. Thus some missionaries were brought home from the field during their term for special deputation assignments in the churches, especially during the fall and winter seasons of mission conferences. I traveled from Panama to four Canadian provinces for a month of such ministry in March of 1982. It was my first experience in the Canadian churches and I received a warm welcome in spite of the cold temperatures. I had left the family in hot and humid Panama City and stepped off the plane in Saskatoon with more than a foot of snow on the ground and temperatures well below

freezing. By the end of the month, I was more than ready to leave the cold behind and return to the tropics. Little did I know at the time that over the next 20 years I would return many times to the warm hospitality of Canadian MB homes in the midst of very cold winters.

By the time Victor Adrian took office, our churches were appealing for closer and more frequent contact with MBM/S representatives. The Secretary for Recruitment and Church Ministries, who was based in the Winnipeg head office, was unable to meet all the requests for speakers or coordinate the increased need for deputation by missionaries from the field in both Canadian and US churches. Thus a U.S. Secretary for Recruitment and Church Ministries was placed in Fresno in 1987. Then, in 1993, the office of the Director for Canadian Constituency Ministries was moved to Abbotsford, thus giving greater visibility for MBM/S in the many BC churches. When that still did not satisfy the cry of the churches for more visibility of our mission team, volunteer Regional Mission Advocates were appointed in six areas, serving between 1996 and 1998. This was further augmented by placing part-time paid Mission Mobilizers in the Winnipeg, Abbostford, and Fresno offices. In October 1998, Russell Schmidt was added to carry this role from a new office in Wichita.

Then in the spring of 1999, the Board called for a major external evaluation of the effectiveness of the Constituency Relations Division of MBMSI. A variety of options were explored in terms of how the evaluation would be conducted and by whom. In the spring of 2000, after my return from a six-month sabbatical leave, the Canadian firm of Ken McLeod and Associates was hired to carry out this evaluation. From May-July of 2000, a total of 155 people were consulted face-to-face through 68 individual interviews and five focus groups in California, Kansas, Manitoba, and British Columbia. A survey instrument was sent to 5,000 people selected at random from the denominational mailing lists in Canada and the United States.

The results of the study were contained in a 42-page report that was presented to the MBMSI Board at its meeting in Waterloo in October 2000. The report highlighted the perceived quality of the mission work done by MBMSI and of its materials and services. However, it also reported a general consensus among constituents that MBMSI was "remote and not effectively connected to churches." Thus the word

"disconnect" became the most talked about outcome of the study. The report further identified four major dynamics affecting MBMSI that are at work to varying degrees across all denominations in North America:

1. The continued weakening of denominational identity as a perceived asset or as a force for motivating support;
2. The steady dilution of automatic loyalty to denominational agencies;
3. The increasing desire for higher levels of customized communication and face-to-face personal interaction in exchange for financial support;
4. The rise in expectations of "service" i.e., that agencies will respond to the needs of the supporting constituency rather than the churches responding to the needs of the mission (or other) agencies.

The report then went on to say that none of these four major dynamics could be eliminated by MBMSI, and thus that the future of MBMSI depended on four factors:

1. The extent to which MBMSI successfully manages those dynamics;
2. The degree to which its acquired skills in mission, its track record and Mennonite Brethren denominational distinctives are harnessed and credibly promoted as assets (rather than being assumed to be assets; or, alternatively, abandoned needlessly);
3. Success in learning how to relate to churches and pastors (especially those of non-MB background);
4. The intentional effort expended to succeed in constituency relationships.

The evaluators also suggested that MBMSI had a two-year window of opportunity to address the issues that had been identified, and presented the Board with 17 formal recommendations about how to do that. The Board spent considerable time in its sessions reviewing the evaluation report and considering its response. There was a realization that a fundamental change in the DNA was needed. A paradigm shift would place MBMSI in more of a facilitator role with the churches and the missionaries doing more to set the agenda.

In its final session in Waterloo, the Board went on record of agreeing in principle with the overall recommendations of the evaluators. However, it was felt that further reflection and processing by staff and board members would be needed before implementation. Two of the recommendations led to immediate action in the form of these resolutions:

- That MBMSI embrace cultivation through service as a fundamental activity for the entire organization, always presenting its case, winning new friends, keeping existing ones, and drawing people closer to the centre of the mission in an intentional manner.
- That MBMSI strengthen, reconceptualize, and fully resource the constituency relations portion of our work, to be worked at by the General Director, Executive Committee, and other persons as needed.

Subsequent processing of the recommendations was carried out at a Constituency Relations Transformation Summit which included 21 participants, including board members, staff members, and other key leaders, held in Fresno in March 2001. Following that summit, the Board Executive approved the creation of new full-time positions for CR Area Directors based in Winnipeg, Abbotsford, and a new branch office in Wichita. These would form a team led by me as General Director, as I would also dedicate at least half time to this role. The overall recommendations were further affirmed by the Board with the adoption of six Strategic Priorities for MBMSI:

- Transformed church relations.
- Transformed mission communication.
- Transformed church partnerships.
- Staff/missionary relational covenant.
- Church missionary covenant.
- Affirmation of the mixed model for funding.

The newly formed CR staff team was given the responsibility for implementation of these priorities with periodic progress reports to be made to the Board and with an overall evaluation of effectiveness to be done in the spring of 2004. It should be noted that the further structural changes precipitated by the Board's action in October 2003 to transition to a new

General Director superseded this timeline. As a result of that action, the entire CR team that had been formed in 2001 was gone by 2005.

The role of our overseas partners in assisting us in the work of constituency ministries is also noteworthy. It was not uncommon for one or more overseas MB leaders to attend the triennial convention of the General Conference. When that occurred, they also visited local churches and helped to communicate in vivid terms the positive results of our mission efforts in starting new churches. The 1984 convention in Reedley had a dozen or more such overseas leaders present and thus presented a rather graphic picture of the changing Mennonite Brethren global reality. I was present at that event to accompany Panamanian indigenous church leader, Narciso Pacheco. After the convention we traveled for a week in California and BC churches promoting the work of global mission and specifically inviting churches to support the work through MBM/S.

In November 1990, the Board of MBM/S more specifically went on record to support the recruitment of international students and other international visitors for ministries in our churches, assuring that their expenses were covered by MBM/S. By 1995, that led to exploration of having a Zairian choir visit North America. As planning progressed for the Year of Global Mission in 1997 the choir, which was named "Esengo" ("Joy" in English), was to become the primary focus of our regional and local church celebrations that year. The choir began its global tour at the MWC Assembly in Calcutta, India. It was a somewhat difficult beginning. We had worked through many bureaucratic difficulties from the Fresno office to get travel visas for the choir. I was in Calcutta, anxiously awaiting their arrival on the first day of the Assembly, but they didn't come. That evening we learned that their plane had experienced difficulty in Kenya and had been delayed. But I also remember with much joy the welcome we gave the choir as they arrived at the Assembly gate two days later. Their ministry at the MWC Assembly on Africa day and in other venues was received with great excitement and much joy.

Following their ministry in Calcutta, the choir toured the MB churches in southern India and in Japan. And then it was time to begin several months of ministry to the MB constituency in North America as a very visible demonstration of the fruit of a hundred years of mission through MBMSI. I had the privilege of accompanying them during

several weekends of ministry in both US and Canadian MB churches. They will long be remembered, not only for their joyful singing, but also for the "active offering style" which they promoted at their concerts. It was a reflection of the joyful style of giving in the Congolese MB churches. Several offering baskets were placed at the front of the church, and while the choir sang a rousing song of praise in Lingala, all those present were asked to "dance down the aisle" leaving their offering in the baskets at the front.

Models for Mission Funding

Funding for the work of our denominational mission effort has always been considered "voluntary." In the early years, local churches took special mission offerings during the visit of a missionary or during an annual mission conference event. Over time, a system of "giving goals," or what were sometimes called "per-member norms," was developed within the conference structure for the funding of the various conference ministries. When I came to the office in 1985, MBM/S used such a system to suggest a level of giving by local MB churches. A projected budget for the total program was taken to the General Conference convention for approval. The approved amount was then divided by the total membership of the conference to determine the appropriate amount that would be needed from each member. Of course, not every church member gave exactly that amount for MBM/S nor did all local churches consider it an obligation. Some churches gave more than the expected norm, some gave less, and some gave little or nothing. Still, in spite of these significant variations in terms of per-member giving, about 90% of the donation income that MBM/S received at that time came from the offerings of local Mennonite Brethren churches.

While this approach was efficient and allowed the MBM/S Board considerable flexibility in implementation of the mission program, there were voices in the constituency calling for greater connections between donors and the work. Already in May 1970, a note in the board minutes states,

> Giving to individual missionaries or taking the responsibility of specific projects is gaining interest in our conference. Carried that we recognize that there is a need to allow individuals and groups to assume responsibility for projects that

> are within the budget. In 1980, the Board agreed that "special projects" of $10,000 or more to be funded by single individuals could be included in the overall mission program but would not be included in the budget used to calculate the "norms."

By the time I joined the staff in 1985, numerous special projects were being funded, especially as they related to church building construction or other capital type expenses. However, the funding of missionary support by designated giving was still not being encouraged. Then, in the fall of 1990, the Board decided that personalized giving for missionaries by churches could supplement unified budget giving, and that this option be publicized more extensively and be promoted. The door to designated missionary support had been opened and this approach would continue to grow.

At the General Conference convention in 1993, this approach was formalized and publicized with the presentation of "Adoption Options" terminology. Local churches, small groups, or individuals were encouraged to adopt a missionary, a project, a program, or a city and then to designate funding toward that purpose. The regular budget was divided into more "bite-size" portions for adoption. But donors also continued to increase their giving for other special projects not in the budget. This led to the introduction of new terminology of "Core and Core-Plus." Those workers, projects, and programs that were pre-planned by staff and approved in advance by the Board were part of the Core budget. But beyond that, other workers, projects, and programs could be developed by our team, by churches, or even by donors, and these would be funded by Core-Plus donations. By mid-1999, the Core operations had a budget of US $3.9 million, while an additional US $1.25 million was projected for the Core-plus program, for a total program of over $5 million.

Parallel to the increase in designated giving was the growing proportion of MBMSI income that came directly to the agency rather than through the offerings of local MB churches. By the year 2002 nearly 50% of the total income was coming that way. This partly reflected the fact that most support for the growing number of short term participants in YMI and CPE was sent directly to the agency. However, there were also a growing number of individual supporters for specific missionaries who chose to send their support directly to MBMSI.

The plateau or even decline in unified budget income made it increasingly difficult for MBMSI to send out new long-term missionaries supported by the general budget. Thus when Team 2000 was being formed for service in Thailand, an approach was developed to have them seek designated support from individuals and churches that would cover their entire support needs. While their support pledged by the time they left in January 2001 was not yet 100%, the experience had been positive enough to generate further discussion about moving toward a new funding model for all missionaries. This model was tested and refined in the constituency during 2002 and 2003 and then was approved at the two conference conventions in July of 2004. All MBMSI missionaries were given a five-year transition period during which all new and continuing missionaries would need to become fully supported by relational funding.

All these changes in our approach to constituency relations not only increased the need for additional staffing, but also necessitated an upgrade in our database technology. On the financial side, the budgeting and accounting operations had already been computerized by John Olfert in the late 1990s. However, the larger number of designated gifts within the budget and of Core Plus projects outside the general budget was not easily tracked using that accounting software. In addition, the expanded CR staff was looking for a way to track contacts with donors, churches, and other constituency members within a computer database. After a year of research the Board approved the purchase of the "Goldmine" contact database software in 2002. It was customized for our needs and has greatly facilitated the shifts in our DNA of constituency relations.

Chapter Nine

PREPARING LEADERSHIP FOR THE YOUNGER CHURCHES

The training of leaders for the younger emerging mission churches was a priority from the beginning of MB mission. In situations like India, Congo, and some other countries where access to public education was limited, this included the creation of private MB elementary and secondary schools to provide basic education to the families of believers. In some cases, this responded to the fact that no public schools were available. In other cases, it was because Christians were persecuted in public schools. In many cases these institutions required huge resources of both personnel and finances from North America to continue operations. Only some survived the transitions to national church ownership of the 1970s.

A second focus of leadership training was biblical and theological education. Some of this was done through mentoring or short-term seminars, but in Congo, India, Colombia, Paraguay, Uruguay, and Brazil Mennonite Brethren Bible schools emerged. Again, similar to the other educational institutions, the faculty for these schools in the initial stages of operation came from North America. This was necessary since no local believers had been trained to that level. Thus as early as 1963, the Board of Missions adopted a policy that would provide scholarship funds for third world students to study in North America (Bd. Minutes, July 1963, 71).

Another form of formal but non-institutional theological education that emerged in some countries was Theological Education by Extension or TEE. Course manuals were prepared that served as a guide to self-study. In several countries, MBM/S missionaries were assigned to write such materials. Then, usually on a weekly basis, the individual student or a group of students, met with the mentor/instructor to review and discuss the work completed in their manual. This form of education had the advantage of allowing students to continue in their secular work or ministry roles while advancing their capacity for Christian leadership. Materials known as FLET are still in use in Latin America today. And

with the coming of the internet, a whole new series of options for extension study have emerged.

In 1966 and 1972, the MBM/S Leadership Scholarship policy was revisited, modified, and expanded. In all cases, students were to have the recommendation of their home church and conference. They were expected to study in MB schools and to return to their country of origin and provide at least three years of service to the church for each year of study in which they received a scholarship. The 1972 revision included a provision for study at non-MB institutions in the home country or at approved institutions in another country of the region. It also increased the annual budgeted amount for such scholarships from $4,000 annually to $20,000 annually.

In1988, the Leadership Scholarship policy was again revised. Its purpose and philosophy were stated as follows: "The purpose of the Leadership Scholarship is to develop strong national church leadership through graduate-level studies in Bible, theology, evangelism and church planting. Scholarships are granted both for in-country or neighboring-country studies, and in North America—preferably at the Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno." The service requirement to the home church following studies was reduced to two years.

Between 1963 and 1997, with the help of these scholarships, dozens of emerging MB leaders from the two-thirds world churches were able to pursue advanced theological studies in India, France, Argentina, Germany, and Paraguay in addition to studies in the United States and Canada. As a result, the theological training institutions in their home countries became largely independent of North American missionary faculty. MBM/S budgets for Leadership Scholarships by that time had grown to $60,000 and more annually.

In 1982 the Board approved the creation of a Professional Scholarship Fund. It recognized that there was a need to assist some members of overseas MB churches financially to pursue advanced studies in non-theological subjects. The purpose was "to assist qualified candidates to develop skills in specialized areas of professional expertise for a service that is recognized as critical for the development of an area or community." One of the students that we mentored in Panama was able to study as an x-ray technician in Costa Rica because of this fund, responding to the need to control TB among his people in Panama.

In 1997 James Pankratz, then president of MBBC in Winnipeg, was asked by the Board of MBMSI to conduct an extensive evaluation of the various aspects of our Leadership Training efforts around the world. Jim interviewed leaders from many countries, sent out surveys to others, and traveled extensively in Latin America. His report was processed by the Board at its meeting of April 1999. Preliminary endorsement was given to the 33 recommendations contained in the report (see April 1999 Board Report and Minutes for details). The Board strongly reaffirmed its Leadership Scholarship program for Master's Level studies. However, they noted that such students studying far from home, such as in the seminary at Fresno, were in danger of losing contact with their home constituency over a three- or four-year period. Thus it was affirmed to make provision for such students to make annual summer visits back to their home constituency. The report and the Board's response were then processed further with partner conferences and schools in other countries. Final recommendations were then adopted in the spring of 2000.

It should be noted that following the transitions in the mission funding model toward relational funding that began in 2004, MBMSI funding for leadership scholarships has been in decline. Some ongoing funding is available from the interest generated by the Memorial Scholarship endowments that were established in both Canada and the United States in the 1970s. However, the total amount of North American funds that will be available for this purpose in the years ahead is an open question.

Section III

Survey of Mennonite Brethren Mission Around the World

Introduction to SECTION III

The chapters that follow provide an overview of the ministries in which MBMSI was involved in some way in some 78 countries during the period from 1966 to 2006. In some of them our presence was limited to the presence of short-term teams for brief periods. In others, Mission Associates have worked in joint appointment with other agencies, often in specialized ministries with no intention of planting MB churches. In a few, MBMSI had no workers present but financially supported an MB outreach started by another MB conference. And finally, there are those in which MBMSI has had a long-term presence of resident missionaries, most often with the intention and result of planting churches that would form an MB conference. I have not attempted to provide in-depth histories or descriptions of the work in each country but have provided an overview of ministry and some expanded observations and reflections on ministry in countries where I lived or visited.

Chapter Ten

AFRICA

My earliest exposure to the work of MB mission in Africa came through the reports of missionaries working there. Two of my cousins, Kathryn and Martha Willems, were missionaries in the Congo and our family received their written reports. Also, Virgil and Edna Kleinsasser, missionaries with SIM in Nigeria, reported in the KMB church where I grew up, and following the merger of 1960, became MBM/S missionaries. But my personal encounter with MB mission in Africa began in 1969 when Helen and I moved to Kinshasa, Congo, for four years to teach MK's. While we were not officially a part of the MBM/S missionary team, we had close connections with them as we taught their children as students and regularly attended missionary fellowship events in Kinshasa.

I continued to broaden my knowledge about MB mission in Africa during the entire period I served in MBMSI administration, including an intense involvement with the planning and implementation of the Esengo choir tour from Zaire in 1997. However, I had only one opportunity to travel to this continent during my 12 years as General Director. It was my month-long sabbatical trip in early 2000 that gave me the broadest exposure to MB mission on this continent. I'll reflect on the changes I have observed, both through presence on the continent as well as through administrative and Board level discussions.

Angola

The work of MB mission in Angola is one of several that did not begin with a strategic plan of the North American mission board. Rather, as Angola endured more than 20 years of civil war from the 1970s until the early 1990s, many refugees crossed the border into Zaire. There some of them encountered groups of Mennonite Brethren believers and began to fellowship with them. When they returned to their homeland, they took their faith family connections with them and soon began MB churches in Angola.

These churches were mainly centered in two areas: 1) in the capital city of Luanda and 2) in the border region of northern Angola near the

MB churches in southern Zaire. The first record of MBM/S discussion about relating to these churches is contained in the Minutes of the April 1984 meeting of the Board. A decision is noted there to present Angola to the General Conference as a new field for mission activity and to then seek to develop closer ties with this newly recognized conference. Concrete steps toward that end would be to sponsor a fraternal visit from Brazil (which shared the Portuguese language with Angola) or from Zaire (where natural connections already existed). There is also mention of sponsoring some students for Bible training and theological studies. It is interesting to note that at this point, MBM/S still assumed the mandate of giving recognition to newly emerging Mennonite Brethren conferences. In later decades, this role would be assumed by ICOMB.

Though administrative visits to Angola were made difficult by the ongoing civil war, at least one visit was made by MBM/S administrative staff and another by a delegation from Brazil during the 1990s. However, the MB churches in Luanda went through a difficult time as various leadership rivalries caused division that resulted in at least two MB conferences being organized. When MBM/S became a full member of the Africa InterMennonite Mission in 1993, consideration was given to transfer our Angola relationship to AIMM. However, the Angolan MB Church asked to continue its direct relationship with MBM/S. Requests for an MBM/S missionary in Luanda were met with a positive response, and a Canadian couple was appointed in October 1992. However, a variety of issues made implementation of that decision impossible.

In January 2000, I participated in the first significant consultation visit of MBMSI personnel with the Angolan MB leadership in nearly a decade. Together with Pakisa Tshimika, Program Director for Africa, and Ron Penner, Personnel Director, we spent five days in Luanda and saw first-hand the poor conditions of a city wracked by over two decades of civil war. Streets that had been paved were in bad shape with many potholes. In the growth areas outside the city core, few if any streets were paved at all. We were lodged in what had once been a small but decent European style hotel. The furniture was in poor condition and the sink in our room had no drain pipe. The hyper-inflation of their economy meant that we needed a briefcase full of cash to buy food. Breakfast for the three of us at the hotel could cost in excess of ten million Kwanza.

During our visit, we did have some significant discussions with

church leaders of the original MB conference. They took us to visit some of their ministry sites, including a church-sponsored school, and we participated in some of their joyful worship services. As an outcome of that visit, negotiations were completed to send the Mununga family from DR Congo as our first resident MBMSI missionaries in Luanda. Pastor Masolo has been helpful in providing counsel for pastors and conference leaders as well as in facilitating more effective outreach.

Between 2002 and 2005, additional attempts were made to expand the presence of missionaries in Angola. Short term personnel were sent from both the US and Brazil. A Brazilian couple was processed and appointed in a partnership between the Brazil MB Conference and MBMSI for long-term service as Bible teachers in Luanda. They spent some months in Angola, but changes in visa requirements made their continuation there impossible at this time.

Botswana and Burkina Faso

In 1975 the Board of MBM/S approved a plan to begin work with African Independent Churches (AIC) in southern Africa. A year later, it was decided to send MBM/S missionaries to work under the Africa Inter-Mennonite Mission (AIMM) in Botswana. After further processing, former MBM/S missionaries in the Congo were sent to help develop a Bible teaching program among the leaders of these churches. MBM/S became an associate member of AIMM for this specific purpose.

Over the next nearly three decades, MBM/S continued to provide missionary teachers for this effort among the AICs in Botswana. Along the way, MCC also joined in the ministry, especially focused on the increasing incidence of HIV and AIDS in Botswana. The joint program became known as Mennonite Ministries and was well received both by the churches and the government.

During my sabbatical trip in January 2000, I visited Botswana and participated in a major consultation to review the work of AIMM with the AICs. It became clear to me that the ministry of MBMSI missionaries Brian and Teresa Born was making a significant impact on AIC leaders and was contributing to their understanding of biblical discipleship. Individuals who had considered their involvement in the church mostly as ritual were developing a close personal relationship with Jesus. However, when the Borns completed their final term of service in 2004,

no further workers were available and thus our ministries in Botswana came to an end.

After reviewing our relationship with AIMM in 1992, the board decided in 1993 to accept their invitation to become full members. This change allowed MBM/S to expand its partnerships through AIMM in all African countries outside of the Congo. This decision led to the processing of Phil and Carol Bergen as MBMSI missionaries. As Mennonite Brethren church members, the Bergens were already serving in Burkina Faso through AIMM, but sponsored by COM of the General Conference Mennonite Church. They had been working with the Nanerige people group in Bible translation.

There was such a positive response to the early portions of the scripture in Nanerige that an effort was begun to recruit additional missionaries to join the Bergens with a specific focus on evangelism and church planting. This led to the appointment in 2002 of a missionary from the Congo MB Church, Sublime Mabiala, under the MBMSI internationalization guidelines. Sublime came to Fresno for a semester of MTI studies and orientation at the seminary. Then he served for a year in Burkina Faso. However, for a variety of reasons, he was unable to adequately adjust and returned to the Congo in 2003. The Bergens continue their work among the Nanerige. Another couple from Canada, Blaine and Michelle Warner, have recently joined them. It is anticipated that with their added presence, the work will be strengthened and will also include church planting.

Congo, Democratic Republic (Zaire)

As mentioned earlier, the DR Congo was the place of my longest exposure to MB mission. Our arrival there in 1969 came just as the country was beginning to recover from some seven years of unrest that had followed independence in 1960. MB mission had a long history in the country, with independent missionaries having begun the work in 1922 and the mission board having adopted it in 1945. Those early decades of ministry were all in the interior of the country, mostly among the Kituba speakers in the Bandundu province. However, by the time Helen and I arrived, the capital city of Kinshasa was home to our team of MB teachers. MK education had been transferred there from the more unstable interior mission schools shortly after independence. Kinshasa was also

the home of several other MBM/S missionaries working in literature, medicine, and theological education.

In 1970, the Board made the decision to transfer the legal charter of the MB Mission in Congo to the national church. This resulted in a transfer of properties in the interior to the national church as well. Some MBM/S missionaries continued to work in the interior, but many now worked in the capital city. The start of church planting in Kinshasa at that time was a significant step in terms of the future growth of the MB church. By the time of my return visit to the DR Congo in January 2000, there were already 30 MB churches in the capital city, with two or more being added each year.

A defining characteristic of the ministry in the Congo from early on was its breadth of ministry. While evangelism that resulted in church planting was certainly a desired goal, the ministry included missionary teachers for secondary education, missionary doctors, pharmacists and nurses, missionary agriculturalists, literature and radio workers, and missionary construction engineers. Over the years, the large expatriate missionary team was responsible for the development of many formal institutions, many of them having substantial buildings which in 1970 had become the property of the church. In 1982 the Board went on record "to facilitate Africanization of all institutional programs." That policy was reaffirmed in 1986, but its realization was not a simple task.

Some of the institutions established by missionaries in earlier years were operating with a western mindset and they were closed or transferred to other entities. Others, such as the hospital in Kajiji, continued to operate. They achieved a greater focus on national staff, but with ongoing assistance by foreign missionary personnel and the need for foreign financial support. The Bible Institute was moved from Kajiji to Kikwit in 1967, a move that required a considerable amount of North American finances for buildings. Over time, the staff became entirely national, except perhaps for the occasional visiting teacher.

Something which affected both the MB church and MB mission between independence in 1960 and the present has been the repeated outbreak of civil war. The first came immediately after independence and led to the evacuation of all the MB missionaries to Angola. Not until 1962 did families return. Between 1963 and 1965, several rebellions caused immense suffering and some targeted Christian churches

and mission stations. The headquarters for MB mission work was thus moved to the city of Kikwit as an alternative to the serious lack of security on the former stations. In 1966, the center for radio and literature work, as well as for MK education, was moved to the capital city of Kinshasa. A complete story of this period and many other details are found in the book by J.B. Toews, *The Mennonite Brethren Church in Zaire*. In 1996, civil war again broke out in Zaire. In May 1997 it led to the ouster of President Mobutu's government, which had been in power since his military coup in 1965. The rebel leader, Laurent Kabila, became president, but in 1998 civil war again broke out and continued to cause much turmoil and suffering.

During the Christmas holidays of 1969, Helen and I spent a week with MBM/S missionaries, Irvin and Lydia Friesen, in Kikwit. It was our first and only trip to the interior during our four years in Kinshasa. Irvin and his son Glen took me for an overnight visit to a nearby village to give me a feel for real village life. We slept on cots in a small mud hut that they had cleaned and swept. Irvin had contracted with some village hunters to find us a wild boar for Christmas dinner. Very early the next morning, they were outside our hut with the meat. But instead of a pig, it was a large monkey. Irvin had them skin it and we took it home for Lydia to prepare. Since the women were not at the house when we returned, Irwin put the monkey in the kitchen sink with the two-foot tail hanging over the edge. The sight produced quite a scream when the women returned. But Lydia was a good sport and we had monkey steaks for Christmas Eve dinner.

On Christmas day, we traveled by car to the historic MB mission station of Kafumba. It was here that Aaron Janzen had settled in 1924; where he had cleared land and planted a palm oil plantation to support the work; and where the work of MB mission in Congo really began. The Friesens had been living in Kafumba at the time of independence and fled from there when the rebels came and burned the buildings. They showed us the foundation of their old house. The only recognizable thing still standing was the cast-iron sounding board of their piano. We attended the Christmas service in the original church building, still standing with a stained glass window in the back wall, but with only half of the roof replaced. It started to rain during the long Christmas story drama. Fortunately, we were under the roof but the actors were not. It

seemed not to bother them, as they went on with the joy of the service. It was a graphic reminder for me of the suffering that the MB church in the Congo has experienced and of the joyful worship for which they are widely known.

Medical ministry was a part of the mission effort in the Congo almost from the start. For a time, MBM/S operated hospitals at both Kajiji and Pai Kongila. The one at Kajiji continues to operate today as a ministry of the Congolese MB Church. It has also operated a nurses training school and for a time was the base for a major public health effort, with much funding coming from Canadian and German sources. Dr. Pakisa Tshmika, who was trained in public health in California, became the director for these projects in the mid-1980s. His leadership was particularly significant during the time of the Ebola outbreak in the mid-1990s. He was also instrumental in establishing a medical clinic in the capital city of Kinshasa, funded initially by a major estate gift from a Canadian MB nurse who had a heart for mission.

In spite of the years of both political and economic turmoil, the MB church in the Congo has grown significantly. Today its membership numbers close to 100,000 with at least 35 churches in the capital city of Kinshasa. It continues to operate a variety of institutions and is a partner in two universities. One of those, the missiology school founded by Dr. Nzash Lumeya, has fanned the flame of missionary zeal in the churches. As a result, they have begun work among the pigmies and in Brazzaville and have sent missionaries through MBMSI to Angola and to South Africa since 2000. While Nzash now lives in Fresno, he continues to make annual visits to the Congo for ministry and to encourage their mission vision.

Since the most recent civil war began in 1998, it is estimated that some three to four million people have died in DR Congo as a result of the hostilities. Many have been killed in the violence itself. Many more have died of disease, malnutrition, and even starvation as a result of the major breakdown of the country's infrastructure. MBMSI has attempted a variety of approaches to help the MB church during this difficult period. Medical missionaries have served in Kinshasa. Support has been provided to the evangelical university, and a number of short term teams and professors have served at the missiology school. However, at the present time there are no resident MBMSI missionaries in the DR Congo

to walk with our brothers and sisters who are suffering there. Discussion continues in our constituency as to what our role should be as partners with them in the gospel. A cease fire with United Nations involvement took effect in 2003, but tensions and violence continue. Elections were scheduled for late in 2006, and many church members, both from the Congo and from other countries, served as election observers.

Egypt

In 1996 I was introduced to Samir and Lewiza Youssef, an Egyptian couple living in British Columbia. As Christian immigrants from the Middle East, Samir was a gifted evangelist and was working with the British Columbia MB conference to plant a church among Arabic speakers in the Vancouver area. As we conversed, Samir made it clear that his vision for evangelism included reaching back into the Middle East, especially to Egypt.

In October 1997, in response to my recommendation, MBMSI appointed the Youssefs as missionaries with the newly formed Muslim Ministry Team. Their assignment was to include evangelism in North America and beyond. It was also to be a cooperative venture with MB Communications in Winnipeg, which would facilitate the production of Arabic radio programs by Samir. The Youssefs moved to Winnipeg for a brief period, but then returned to BC where they continued to base their ministry.

The radio program has had wide distribution not only in Egypt but all across the Middle East and in key cities of North America. An Arabic Christian magazine is produced several times a year and is also distributed widely. In recent years, Samir has worked with Family Life Network (formerly MB Communications) of Winnipeg to produce a television program that features interviews with Arabic speakers around the world. He has made several trips per year to Egypt to produce and follow up these programs. He has also led a number of YMI teams to Egypt and other parts of the Middle East as a part of these ministry trips.

The radio and television programs have brought significant response. Arabic Bibles and the Arabic magazine are sent to those who request them. In recent years, Family Life Network has worked with Samir and another staff person, Emmanuel, a former Muslim convert from the Sudan, to create an Arabic ministry website. The website is

mentioned on the TV and radio programs. As a result, a "virtual church" of new believers has emerged from various Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and North Africa who visit a web based chat room and have made decisions to follow Jesus in that context. Currently, MBM-SI is developing plans to develop a more comprehensive approach to church planting in several countries of northern Africa.

Ethiopia

Mennonite ministry in Ethiopia began after World War II, when the Mennonite Relief Committee and MCC sent workers to administer medical, educational, and relief programs. Missionaries from the Eastern Mennonite Mission joined them in December 1947 to begin a spiritual ministry that would lead to church planting. The long-term result of that ministry is the Meserete Kristos Church (or MKC) which has become one of the largest and fastest growing Anabaptist conferences in the world. The details of the story are told in the book by Nathan Hege, *Beyond our Prayers*.

In 1998, I met a young Ethopian leader at a CIM meeting in Chicago. Bedhru Hussein was doing graduate studies at Eastern Mennonite Seminary and was serving as Vice President of Mennonite World Conference. As we worked together to plan the Global Anabaptist Mission consultation in Guatemala, he encouraged me to plan a visit to his homeland to see the MKC for myself. Thus it was that the first stop on my sabbatical trip to Africa in January 2000 was in Addis Ababa.

I learned that the MKC had grown to about 5,000 members from its beginnings in 1948 until the churches were closed by the communist government in 1982. That forced the churches to go underground and they began to meet in secret house groups. The government forced many city dwellers with education to move to rural areas as literacy promoters. As believers were scattered into the countryside, they started new house groups. When the church was again allowed to meet openly a decade later, they had grown to nearly 50,000 believers. When I visited in 2000, they had grown to 150,000 and today they number about 200,000.

During my visit to Addis Ababa in 2000, my hosts took Pakisa and me to visit the museum of natural history. In rather old and deteriorating buildings, it housed the skeletal remains from many archeological digs in Ethiopia. Included was one that was believed to be the oldest known

skeleton with human characteristics. Then our hosts took us to what they called the "new museum." It was a new and luxurious international class hotel, built with marble columns on a hillside that had formerly been a squatter slum. An Ethiopian with Arab oil connections had financed the project, and it included elaborate formal gardens and fountains. One of its chalets where the US Secretary of State had recently stayed rented for $10,000 per night.

In conversations with the MKC leadership during my visit, I was told that one of the greatest needs of their rapidly growing churches was to receive help in training more leaders at an advanced level who could in turn train others. Upon my return to the office after sabbatical, I recommended to the MBMSI Board that we develop a partnership with the MKC for training leaders. The partnership was approved and, as a result, we began to offer leadership scholarships for MKC students. So far, four students from the MKC have attended our seminary in Fresno, with some already having returned to teach at the MKC Bible College in Addis Ababa. We have also sent a YMI team and some short-term professors to the Bible College under the International Teacher Exchange program.

South Africa

During the years that we lived in the Congo, about the only contact that MB missionaries had with South Africa was for purposes of vacation or specialized medical treatment. However, the end of apartheid there and the start of the civil war in Congo in the late 1990s changed all that. A significant number of Congolese and some French speaking individuals from other countries fled the war and went to South Africa. Some stayed in Johannesburg, but many found their way to the coastal city of Durban.

During my sabbatical trip of January 2000, I visited Durban at the invitation of MCC workers living there. I was introduced to a family of Congolese refugees who were Christians, living temporarily in a small apartment. They shared their refugee story with me. They had walked all the way from eastern Congo to the South African border. They had managed to enter South Africa, but in the process of travel to Durban were somehow separated from their teenage son. Just before my visit he had arrived in Durban and was reunited with them, for which they praised God.

This family invited us to help start a church planting effort among French speakers in Durban. Later that year, the Board of MBMSI approved our entry into South Africa for church planting, with hopes of recruiting missionaries from the Congo. Workers were identified but then the lack of visas delayed the process. Some assistance was provided by Mennonite Board of Missions contacts. Then, on one of his visits to Congo, Nzash Lumeya was able to intervene and visas were granted. Thus the Nsulunka family from Kinshasa was finally able to move to Durban in 2004 as missionary church planters. They have had some response and a small MB church is emerging there. There are projections to expand the MB church planting effort in South Africa to Johannesburg and other cities as well.

Other Ministries in Africa with MBMSI Connections

Mission Partnerships

Djibouti lies just above Ethiopia and across the Red Sea from Saudi Arabia. While as a primarily Muslim nation it is closed to traditional missions, there is opportunity for witness through creative approaches. Eastern Mennonite Missions, which has been active in Ethiopia for many decades, has sponsored English teachers to Djibouti. At the end of the 20th century, MBMSI was able to send an MB couple to Djibouti for this purpose through our Mission Associate category.

MBMSI was connected to ministries in several African countries through the appointment of Mission Associates. In 2000, we appointed a Canadian couple to serve in **Benin/Togo**, through a joint appointment with Wycliffe/SIL. They provided administrative support for Bible translation projects.

MBMSI sent Mission Associate workers to **Dakar, Senegal**, in 2000 in joint appointment with Wycliffe Canada. They were involved in administrative support for Bible translation projects in the country. Following the decision by MBMSI to change support patterns, these missionaries have since withdrawn from the joint appointment arrangement.

Beginning in 2004, we were able to send workers to **Morocco** as Mission Associates, in joint appointment with Arab World Ministries. Projections for expansion in North Africa were approved by the MBMSI Board in 2005. MBMSI leaders have made two trips here to explore op-

portunities for further ministry. Thus there is potential for more workers being sent to this region.

Sometimes known as "the other Congo," the Congo Republic, whose capital city of **Brazzaville** lies just across the river from Kinshasa, was a French colony prior to independence. I was briefly introduced to the city when our plane landed there instead of at Kinshasa when we began our first term as teachers in 1969. Although it was just a short ferry ride away from our work in Kinshasa, our North American missionaries had never considered expanding our mission efforts there.

However, as the mission vision grew within the Congo MB Church, and especially as young leaders with mission vision were trained at the mission training school in Kinshasa, a vision to reach across the river to Brazzaville emerged. With some financial assistance from MBMSI, the Kinshasa churches sent a young woman, who had completed studies at the mission school, to Brazzaville for church planting in 1999. Thus Congo Brazzaville became the second country in Africa to see MB churches emerge as the result of Congolese/Zairian mission initiatives. Projections have been made to continue the expansion of MB mission from Kinshasa into Gabon and the Central African Republic.

In our partnership with the Africa Intermennonite Mission, some of our Botswana missionaries have also ministered in **Lesotho** for brief periods. Several openings for full time missionaries there were also approved by MBM/S between 1981 and 1989, specifically to pastor an international church. However, MB personnel to fill those openings were not found.

The country of **Namibia** lies just south of the Angolan border, on the South Atlantic coast. The work of MB mission in Namibia is an outreach from the MB conference of Angola, which itself came through contact with the MB conference of the Congo. Thus in a sense, the MB Church of Namibia is three generations removed from the MB mission efforts of the North American churches. Workers from Luanda have made regular visits to the three emerging churches in Namibia, and since 2003 MBMSI has financially assisted the Namibian church with leadership training. In 2005 the church there made a request to ICOMB for recognition as a Mennonite Brethren conference. This story represents what may increasingly become the norm for Mennonite Brethren mission in the world.

As a result of the merger with the KMB conference in 1960, a number of KMB missionaries working under the Sudan Interior Mission in **Nigeria** became part of the MBM/S missionary team. They were fully supported by the MB Board of Missions general budget but fully under the administration of SIM. In 1970, the Board adopted policies seeking to reduce its participation in education and medical programs. In keeping with that policy, they asked staff to negotiate the termination of support for these missionaries with SIM.

However, the Minutes record that this decision was revisited in October of 1971. It had become clear that such an action would create ill will and misunderstanding among the former KMBs. Thus the Board agreed to continue support for these and other former KMB missionaries serving under other agencies for as long at they served. The missionaries in Nigeria were involved in a variety of Bible teaching and support ministries until the last of them retired in 1992. Some financial support has continued into retirement. More recently, we have sent CPE/DMI teams to Nigeria for door to door evangelism with the churches there.

Short-Term Teams

Helen and I spent some weeks of vacation in **Kenya** in 1970 during our period of residence in the Congo. As we were hosted at the Mennonite Guest House in Nairobi, we learned about the extensive mission efforts of the Eastern Mennonite Mission in that country. In recent years, MBMSI has sent a number of short term teams to Kenya. A YMI team served in a refugee camp in the north of the country, near the border with Sudan. A number of CPE/DMI teams have also ministered in door-to-door evangelism with a variety of churches.

A number of CPE/DMI teams have gone to **Malawi** for door to door evangelism together with members of churches in this country. In 2003, a YMI team served in **Mali** in partnership with missionaries serving under another mission. On the southeastern coast of Africa, **Mozambique** has also received CPE/DMI teams for door to door evangelism in partnership with local evangelical churches.

Zimbabwe, also on the southeast coast of Africa, has had significant Anabaptist mission effort by the Brethren in Christ churches. MBMSI has sent short term teams for door to door evangelism through our DMI program. Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, was also the site of the 2003 Menno-

nite World Conference which drew a large number of MB participants, including MBMSI representatives and MBMSI-sponsored tour groups.

Chapter Eleven

ASIA/PACIFIC

My exposure to MB mission in Asia began as part of the "round-the-world" trip which Helen and I took with our young son, Lowell, in the summer of 1971. Our travel started in Kinshasa in Africa where we lived at the time, but traveling east we entered the Asian continent at New Delhi, India. We were aware of the MB mission activity further south, but did not actually observe it on that trip. However, during our last Asian stop that year in Japan, we did get a broad overview of the MB mission effort there while we stayed with MBM/S missionaries in both Osaka and Nagoya.

My broadest exposure to MB mission in Asia has been during the 12 years I served as General Director, from 1992 to 2004. I made six trips to Asia during that period. In the years since, I made more trips to Thailand, where our daughter Carmen and family are serving as missionaries with Team 2000 since January of 2001.

Afghanistan

This central Asian country that has been so much in our North American news since the events of September 11, 2001, has been part of the MB mission map for more than three decades. Dr. Herb and Ruth Friesen arrived in Kabul in 1969. In 1971, the Board of MBM/S decided to become a full member of the International Afghan Mission (IAM), later known as the International Assistance Mission. While no efforts were made to plant MB churches in the country, workers were appointed under IAM for works of compassion and medical care in this Muslim dominated land. In creative ways, these workers also were able to share a Christian witness and encourage the small underground believer's church in the country. The story of our ministries in Afghanistan is perhaps best summarized by the stories of two men and their families, one a Canadian administrator and the other an American ophthalmologist. Both have now gone to be with the Lord

Dr. Herb Friesen had a passion to give sight to the Afghan people. Many suffered from eye diseases, which he was able to treat. During the many years of civil war and the Russian occupation, many more suf-

fered debilitating eye injuries, and Dr. Friesen was able to help many regain their sight through delicate surgeries. But Herb had an even greater passion which was to give Afghan people spiritual sight by introducing them to Jesus. In the conservative Muslim context, his witness eventually led to his expulsion from the country. However, he later continued his mission to Afghans from a clinic across the border in Peshawar, Pakistan. After his retirement and prior to the US invasion, Dr. Friesen again was able to make short visits to Afghanistan to treat patients, train Afghan doctors, and to encourage the believers he loved. His personal story is told in the book, *A Reluctant Surgeon*, his autobiography. Herb passed away in Hillsboro, Kansas in 2005, after a struggle with cancer.

Richard and Anne Penner came to Kabul to assist in the administration of the eye hospital that Dr. Friesen had helped to found. During the years of the Russian occupation, when many expatriates left the country, the Penners continued to live in Kabul, often having to dive into shelters during bombing raids and other forms of attack on the capital. Later, they were able to live for a time in the northern Afghan city of Mazar, and finally continued to minister from a base in neighboring Uzbekistan. In 2003, Richard was killed when the plane he was in, returning from a visit to Afghanistan, crashed on approach to the Tashkent airport. He is buried in Tashkent. Both Richard and Herb will long be remembered as friends of the Afghan people

China

As mentioned in an earlier chapter, the work of MB mission in China was actually begun in 1901 by KMB missionaries Henry and Anna Bartel, who formed the China Mennonite Mission Society. They were joined in the work over the years by Mennonite Brethren and others, and had a very successful church planting ministry in the south central region surrounding the city of Caoxian. Their son, Loyal Bartel was born in China and thus, as a Chinese citizen, he was able to remain even after the communist revolution. He spent some time under house arrest, but also had opportunity to continue in ministry until his death in Caoxian in 1977.

During my sabbatical visit to China in December 1999, I was privileged to visit the church in Caoxian. I was joined in the city of Zhuangzhou by the country team leader for China Educational Exchange (CEE),

Rod Suderman. We visited our CEE teachers in that city and then on a Saturday morning drove through the Chinese countryside for about five hours to reach Caoxian and an English speaking protestant pastor from Zhuangzhou went with us as our translator. I'll never forget the greeting we were given upon our arrival at the Caoxian hotel. We were met at the car door by five men. Three of them were elders from the church. The other two were from the government religious affairs bureau. Verbally, they assured us of their intention to make sure we remained safe during our visit. In reality, it seemed their main desire was to monitor what we said and did.

That same afternoon, together with our government escort, we visited the site of the old Bartel mission. It is now a government high school. The former church building at the site was torn down to make room for road widening. However, some years prior to our visit, the government had given the church new property just down the road, where they built a sanctuary for 1,000 people. When we returned there on Sunday morning we were welcomed to the church by several leaders who gave us tea in the church office. Then we were led to a side door and found ourselves on the platform. Of course, the two government officials were at our side.

At the hotel the day before, we had asked if I could bring greetings to the church from the churches in North America that had sent the Bartels to China. The first response was that foreigners were not allowed to preach in China. When we clarified it was only a request to bring greetings, they said they would let us know. Shortly after we sat down on the platform, they did just that. I was invited to bring my greetings. I did so before a fully packed sanctuary, also adding that I felt like we were part of one body in Christ, although widely separated by geography. The response was a loud and long round of applause from the congregation. That happened twice in spite of the attempts of the government officials to stop them. We then left the platform and were escorted to a front pew where we stayed for the remainder of the worship service. The service included choir numbers and a clear gospel message from Romans 10 by an elderly woman preacher.

We were told by the church leaders that they had baptized over 1,000 new believers from their region in the year before our visit. The message we heard was a part of a series in preparation for another baptism

at Christmas. Seeing the vitality of the church in Caoxian was a wonderful testimony to the lasting results of the work of the Bartels and the other Mennonite missionaries and to God's faithfulness through many changes and years of testing in China. During our meeting in the hotel, I asked Elder Su from the church what I should tell the people back in North America. He told me, "Please thank the churches for sending the Bartels. They brought us the gospel." He also asked that we continue to pray for the church in Caoxian and that they would remain faithful.

The major involvement by MBM/S in China during the period of my administration was the sending of English teachers through the China Educational Exchange (CEE). Approval was given by the Board in April 1983 to become a member of this agency, along with several other Mennonite mission boards and colleges. Teachers were placed in a variety of teacher training and medical colleges in China for two or three-year terms. While their witness in the classroom has been mainly through their service as a teacher, they also had some opportunity for verbal witness during times of informal interaction with their students. The program has also provided opportunity for some Chinese educators to visit in North American colleges or other settings.

As a part of my sabbatical visit to China, I spent two days with CEE teacher Warren Harder in the southern megacity of Chongqing. It is built along the bank of the Yangtze River, a primary transportation route and famous for its river cruises through the three gorges. Warren took me to visit the city's bustling river port. He also introduced me to his English class where they were practicing conversation about western marriage practices. I was invited to tell them about how I had met my wife while teaching in short-term mission in South America. Warren told me of the many conversations he had outside of class which often led to topics of spiritual significance.

During the last several years of my term as General Director, we began some exploration of other opportunities for ministry involvement in China. We sponsored a Mission Associate couple as part of a team working in Macao under another Mennonite agency. We also explored possible mission connections in Hong Kong together with our Chinese MB churches in Vancouver. We did some research for the possible entry of a team in Northwest China to work among an unreached people group there. However, none of these explorations had resulted in firm decisions

for new initiatives by the time of my departure from the MBMSI staff. Certainly, China which was one of our earliest fields for MB mission is also a strategic location for further efforts to reach the least reached in the decades ahead.

India

India was the first country to which the Mennonite Brethren in the Ukraine sent foreign missionaries. It was also the first overseas location to which the North American MB churches sent missionaries under their own mission structure. The ministry and sacrifice of many dozens of missionaries and hundreds of Indian workers over the past century has been blessed by God and has born much fruit. Today, the Indian Mennonite Brethren Conference, with most of its churches in the south-central Andhra Pradesh state, is the largest of our global family of faith. It has more than 100,000 baptized members, and as many as 400,000 are a part of the church family, when children, non-member spouses, and other attenders are included.

As mentioned earlier, I first visited India as a tourist in 1971. I came away rather negatively impressed by what I called its "three p's": pollution, poverty, and people. Pollution is not only the result of underdevelopment in many areas, but even more the result of its race to develop at any cost. Pervasive poverty is partly the result of its caste system, but also is fueled by India's unhindered population explosion. By the year 2000, it had passed the one billion mark and will soon surpass China as the most populous country in the world. Thus it seems that wherever you go in India, there are crowds of people.

The story of our early work in India is well documented in a variety of other writings, and thus I will not seek to provide an historical summary here. Perhaps the most comprehensive work is that of Peter Penner, published in 1997 under the title: *Russians, North Americans, and Telugus; The Mennonite Brethren Mission in India, 1885-1975.* In the closing chapters of that work, he mentions the legacy of a colonial model of mission. He notes that this had resulted in a variety of power struggles both within the missionary community and within the emerging leadership groups of the India Mennonite Brethren churches.

I became acutely aware of these issues when I assumed the role of General Director in 1992. The court battles of the 1970s had for a time

been placed on the back burner, but now they again became active. By 1993, a competing Governing Council for the India MB churches had been formed and was claiming the legal status of the conference. This led to a court battle to determine which leadership group had authority, with MBM/S also named in the lawsuit. As a result, a visit to India by our Regional Director for Asia was postponed. Serious questions were being raised about the handling of financial subsidies being sent to India, since reporting was inadequate. Further questions were being raised about the management of the properties that had been turned over to the MB Property Association by the mission in 1975. In April 1994, the Board of MBM/S decided to discontinue the sending of financial subsidies through the India church Governing Council as of May 31 that year. It was a time of crisis in our relationship with the MB church in India.

In March 1995, the MBM/S Board agreed to participate together with ICOMB in sending an international delegation to India to encourage reconciliation. I was part of a four-person team that also included our Board Chair, Neil Fast; Edmund Janzen, Moderator of the General Conference and Chair of ICOMB; and Takashi Manabe, seminary president from Japan and Vice-Chair of ICOMB. Our visit to India took place in late May and was filled with tension.

We first met as a team in a Hyderabad hotel, where we reviewed our approach and then invited each of the competing "Governing Councils" to visit us for consultation. The legally constituted body defended their right to protect the conference properties through legal actions when needed. The competing group presented us with a list of their grievances and the alleged misdeeds of the other group. After hearing their perspectives and reviewing our role, we decided to host a reconciliation session at the Shamshabad Bible School compound to which both groups would be invited. The session would be moderated by Edmund Janzen, as Chair of ICOMB.

Both groups agreed to attend, so as a team we moved to the mission guest house on the campus for the next phase of our visit. The arrival of the members of the two opposing groups of leaders was tense. We had arranged to use the church building on the compound for the sessions. A large U-shaped table had been set up, with the two groups facing each other on either side and the visiting team on the end. Edmund invited each group to air their grievances and then sought to bring out points

of agreement and to encourage reconciliation. While that was not fully achieved, there was a commitment to treat all church members fairly and agreement to invite Werner Kroeker to come for a period of time as a liaison from the North American churches. A written agreement was signed the next day which would allow for a resumption of financial subsidies from MBM/S to the India church, through the original Governing Council.

One point of conflict between the leadership groups was the matter of how church properties were used and how the rental income was disbursed. Of particular concern to the opposition was the vision of Dr. Arnold to create a medical school. He had already launched that school prior to our visit, on the campus that MBM/S had helped to build for the Junior College in Mahbubnagar. Our team was taken for a VIP visit to the facility, including a room full of microscopes and a view of the tank of formaldehyde where human corpses were stored. The school was shut down by legal action soon after, with students filing lawsuits to recover tuition. However, since 2005 the vision has again emerged with new life and a medical school facility is now being built on the campus of the MB Medical Centre in Jadcherla.

Of course, our visit would not have been complete without a visit to some Indian homes. I had developed a relationship much earlier, during seminary studies, with R.S. Lemuel, who now served on the Governing Council Executive. I was privileged to share a meal in their home near the medical center. Our team was also invited to the home of Dr. Arnold and his wife Sarada at Jadcherla. We were treated to a delicious luncheon of fried chicken and mashed potatoes, hardly an Indian menu but a reminder of the legacy of western missionary presence.

Following the visit of our international team, Werner and Elsie Ann Kroeker accepted a call to represent MBM/S and the North American churches to the India MB Conference for a period of two years. Their ministry in India became a significant factor in renewing our relationship and in building a greater sense of trust and accountability. Werner's pastoral approach was warmly received by members of both leadership groups and at least some were able to move beyond the disputes of the past. In fact, I believe that history will show that the ministry of the Kroekers was a turning point in beginning to build a true partnership with the India MB Conference.

Two years after the visit of the reconciliation team, I returned to India as an MBM/S representative to the Mennonite World Conference Assembly being held in Calcutta. Calcutta is a massive and highly polluted city on the Bay of Bengal. The gathering drew some 4,000 people to the campus of a private school, an expanse of green in the midst of this crowded city. Plenary sessions were held under a giant cloth tent called a "shamiana." It was an awesome experience. Others have written of the details of the event. For me, it was a "once in a lifetime" opportunity to see the true nature of the global Anabaptist church. Two-thirds world delegates were in the overwhelming majority with India, of course, having the largest number present. The sessions included a significant focus on the mission of the church and significant times for prayer.

Following the Assembly, I flew to Hyderabad and joined with a tour group being led by Elmer Martens to visit MB churches. After some orientation and welcome events in the city, we traveled south by bus to the Gadwal region. There we were hosted in Indian homes, while visiting village churches and the Bible school on the campus of the old MBM/S mission station. We experienced awesome hospitality as our hosts shared their homes and their lives with us. In my case, together with my roommate, Harry Heidebrecht, we stayed in a house with only one bedroom. It was given to us for the night, while the family cleared out the dining room and slept there on the floor.

During our visit to Gadwal and later in a stop made on the return trip, we saw several structures that were built by the early MB missionaries who had adopted the "compound model" of the British colonial rulers. With the compound surrounded by a fence or block wall, the main residence was a large "bungalow" house with high ceilings and a surrounding veranda. It was a style of living that clearly separated the missionaries from the culture and the people they had come to reach. Many of us on the tour found it hard to understand why they had chosen this approach. However, we also realized that we could not judge the practices of another era by the perspectives of our own. We did also note that these structures were in a state of disrepair, though some efforts were being made to preserve their value.

My last visit to India was in November 1999 in connection with the Centennial celebration of North American mission in India and partnership with the India MB Church. I joined MBMSI Board Chair Neil

Fast for a hotel stay in Hyderabad during the event, though the primary activities were held in Jadcherla and Shamshabad. This meant a daily ride by taxi on the highway of about two hours in each direction. It was a frightening experience. The highway is basically three lanes, with car, truck, and bus traffic using mostly the middle lane in both directions. That is because the two side lanes are also used by a mix of oxcarts, bicycles, motorcycles, and pedestrians. Our taxi and many larger vehicles would only move toward the side lanes to pass each other and thus avoid a head-on collision. Driving on that highway seemed much like a continuous game of "chicken" to me. One night as we returned, our taxi experienced a flat tire. There was no shoulder on which to pull off, but since the side lane was largely unused at that hour, our driver managed to change the tire while parked there. Surely the angels were watching over us on those trips.

The main sessions of the Centennial Convention were held under a large *shamiana* on the grounds of the Jadcherla Medical Centre. More than 1,000 attended the evening sessions. The opening session included a ceremony recognizing the contribution of Canadian and US churches over the past 100 years in establishing what today is the India MB Conference. As more than 20 North American delegates were seated on the platform, the multiple wicks of three oil lamps were lit one-by-one, each by a pair composed of an Indian church leader with a North American guest. At the end of the service, two of the lamps were presented to delegates from Canada and the US to take back as a reminder of our partnership in mission. It was a powerful testimony to what God has accomplished through MB mission work in India, in spite of human weakness and conflicts. At the closing session on Sunday morning, I was invited to bring the message from Psalm 77:11-15: "I will remember the deeds of the Lord; yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago." I reflected on God's faithfulness over 100 years of MB mission in India. I also challenged those present to continue to reach out, even as there are still many largely unreached Telegu villages and many other unreached people groups in India, especially in the North.

Two other events took place at Shamsabad during the Centennial week that highlighted the growth and maturing of the India MB Conference. The first related to its vision and efforts to train Indian pastors, evangelists, and other church leaders. The Bible Institute at Shamsabad

had been established by missionaries to train church workers in the Telegu language. Later, a Bible College had been started there to provide for advanced theological training in the English language. It was struggling financially and finding it difficult to attract quality faculty. During our visit, we presented the school with the funds for the first three Faculty Chair Endowments. These were funds raised in North America, to be added to funds raised in India. The interest from these endowments will provide ongoing salaries for the Bible College faculty. Before my departure as General Director in 2004, three additional chairs had been funded, and at least two more were projected. The other event of the Centennial was a ribbon cutting ceremony to officially open the India MB Church archives. It was a significant step in preserving the history of this MB conference, the largest in our global family of faith.

My challenge to the centennial assembly to pursue a vision for broader MB mission in India has begun to become a reality. In further conversations with some of the India MB leaders in 1999, several expressed a vision to open new work in the North of India. Then in 2003 and 2004, a vision grew in North America to form a new missionary team to be based in Delhi. Three families left for India in the summer of 2005, and after a period of intensive Hindi language study have now settled in Delhi. Their strategy is to work among middle class young professionals, a growing segment of Indian society. There are also projections for workers from the India MB Church in the south to join them and for further church planting in both Delhi and other regions of north India. I believe the India MB church will continue to grow in the decades ahead as we continue to partner in mission to some of the world's least reached peoples.

Indonesia

In October 1973, the Board of MBM/S recognized Indonesia as a new field of missionary involvement, to work together with the Chinese Mennonite Church there, known as GKMI. The approach was to send North American missionaries to help train and work with a group of Indonesian evangelists from the GKMI through their mission board, PIPKA. MBM/S would also provide some financial support for these evangelists in their church planting efforts among unevangelized groups in Indonesia. In 1975, this move was affirmed by the General Confer-

ence and two missionary couples were appointed. The initial support commitment was for a ten-year period.

Missionaries Dale and Joyce Warkentin and Dan and Helen Nickel served in this training ministry during this initial period. In 1984, the Board of MBM/S agreed to renew support for the Indonesian church planters for another ten years to 1994, on a declining scale. And while resident missionaries were no longer present, a number of fraternal visits were made to encourage the work. A significant number of village churches have been planted through this partnership. In 1994, MBM/S agreed to negotiate a new seven-year agreement with PIPKA for some continued financial support for a variety of projects in Indonesia.

My sabbatical visit to Indonesia in November 1999 was a memorable occasion. On my arrival in Jakarta, I was taken immediately from the airport to a pastor's house for lunch. Included on the menu was frog leg soup. Being a first time visitor to Indonesia, they watched me carefully as I tried it and asked me how I liked it. In respect to their hospitality, I perhaps responded in more glowing praise than was warranted. I would learn the consequences on my last evening in Jakarta. Meanwhile, I went north to Semarang where I met with GKMI leaders and heard about their challenges of ministry in a Muslim culture. I also worshipped with them in a large church there.

On my return to Jakarta, an evening dinner meeting with the PIPKA mission board was arranged. Another aspect of our third partnership agreement had been a request from MBMSI to PIPKA to prepare missionaries that could join with MBMSI teams in other countries, particularly where the work was in Muslim areas. I wanted to make a specific request for them to help us with the effort to reach the Baluch in Pakistan. But before we could discuss that, we were served dinner. They had heard of my "love for frog legs." And so we had a complete spread of frog leg soup, roasted frog legs, sweet and sour frog legs, and several more delicacies. They all had a good laugh and I had my fill for a lifetime! We did eventually explore the idea of Indonesian PIPKA missionaries joining some MBMSI teams. And in 2004, Dale and Joyce Warkentin returned to Indonesia for a six-month term to help PIPKA develop such a missionary sending program. However, to date no PIPKA missionaries have been appointed to work with MBMSI church planting teams.

Japan

As mentioned earlier, my first exposure to MB mission in Japan came in 1971 when we made a brief visit to our MBM/S missionaries in Osaka and Nagoya during our round-the-world trip. Perhaps my strongest impression from that introduction was the fact that our outreach in Japan has not been focused on the poor as was the case in so many other countries. In general, Japan has a very high standard of living and both MBMSI and its missionaries are stretched to meet the high costs of living associated with work there.

MB mission efforts began in Japan shortly after the end of World War II, primarily in the Osaka area. Thus Osaka became the hub of the MB conference. However, after a cluster of churches had been planted in Osaka, expansion began to Nagoya further north and to Hiroshima further west. In the 1980s, missionaries Steve and Bobbie Friesen were located in greater Tokyo to begin church planting in Japan's capital city. Over a period of several terms of ministry, a church was planted in the suburb city of Kawasaki. However, the provision of land and a church building became a major challenge. In support of the church plant, MBM/S sold a former missionary residence in Osaka in 1989 which had greatly appreciated in value. About $1 million of the proceeds were used to purchase a lot in Kawasaki. A further grant and loan were made for the completion of a church building on the property. The church has become stable and self-supporting, but the high costs involved resulted in a decision to not attempt further expansion in the Tokyo region at that time.

Training pastors was an early focus in Japan and has continued to bear fruit in giving stability to its churches. In 1967, the MBM/S Board provided capital funds for the construction of buildings for Osaka Biblical Seminary, a joint project with the Baptists. However, by 1971, the Japan MB Church had decided to withdraw from that partnership and to develop its own MB training program. The result is the Evangelical Biblical Seminary for training MB leaders in Osaka. Its doctrinal focus on dispensationalism has been the topic of ongoing discussion and even some conflict over the decades that have followed. Also, in recent years the number of students able and willing to attend the seminary has declined, resulting in a lack of enough prepared younger pastors. Established MB churches whose pastor is retiring as well as new missionary

church plants have had difficulty finding a pastor trained by the MB seminary.

I visited Japan for the second time in 1993 together with Asia Director Dale Warkentin and his wife Joyce. We met with a variety of conference leadership committees to discuss our partnership in mission. Of special interest was the vision of the Japan churches to send out overseas missionaries. They had already sent Keiko Hamano to join our MBM/S team in Pakistan and now were preparing to sponsor two couples for church planting in California. We encouraged their Mission Committee to continue to call out and send missionaries to other Asian countries in partnership with MBM/S.

I have one especially lasting memory from that visit of a dinner out with conference chair, Takashi Manabe and his family. We went to a typical Japanese style restaurant where we squatted on the floor beside a low table. When they brought our appetizer of cold soup, some small fish were still swimming in it! I gamely swallowed the soup and Dr. Manabe got his laughs. I have enjoyed many other good times with brother Manabe as well as we met in the context of ICOMB meetings over the next decade.

One somewhat unique aspect of our mission outreach in Japan over recent decades has been the sending of North American English teachers to work with the Japanese MB churches. During our 1993 visit, we visited two young women and one young man working as teachers in the Osaka area churches. MBMSI continues to place ESL teachers in Japan to work with the MB churches. They are supported mostly through the funds which the local churches receive as tuition from the English students. The contacts made through these classes have provided an effective avenue for the churches to make pre-evangelism contacts in their communities. An interesting side-note to this program comes from my final participation in an ICOMB meeting in Paraguay in 2004. At that time, Dr. Manabe and I interviewed a young German-Paraguayan woman who had English fluency. She subsequently went to Japan to teach English through this MBMSI partnership with the Japan MB churches.

During our 1993 visit, we also went to the Nagoya suburb called Toyota City where missionaries Laurence and Leona Hiebert were in the early stages of a new church planting effort. An ESL teacher has also been part of their team. However, unlike many earlier church plants, a

stable and self-supporting congregation ready for a Japanese pastor did not emerge during two terms of missionary effort in Toyota City. An intensive evaluation of our mission efforts and strategy was carried out in 1997 by an outside evaluator. Over the years that have followed, it became the focus of much consultation and even debate about church planting strategy and the nature of our partnership with the Japan MB conference. It has become clear that some of the effective church planting methods of the past will not be equally effective in this new century.

Were it not for the vision and perseverance of the Hieberts, the effort in Toyota City may well have been abandoned. But through the generosity of many North American donors, land was purchased in 2003 and at the end of 2005 a new church building was dedicated on the property. The congregation is still small and a Japanese pastor has not yet been assigned to the church. A retired MB pastor served as interim leader during the Hiebert's MINA in North America in 2006. No further MB church plants in Japan by North American missionaries are currently projected.

Pakistan

Though there is a Christian minority living in Pakistan, it is known as a Muslim country. Its involvement in the current "war on terror" along its border with Afghanistan and the major earthquake along its disputed border with India have received much news coverage. For MBM/S, Pakistan has been a location for global mission since 1981.

Medical personnel were the first to enter Pakistan, in response to the needs of the refugees from Afghanistan. For a time we had a nurse and doctor at the Christian hospital in Taxila. However, in late 1983 the focus shifted to the eye hospital in Peshawar, working in cooperation with the SERVE agency. Dr. Friesen continued to minister there until he was able to return to Afghanistan in late 1993. At several points during this period the Board also discussed how we might begin a church planting ministry in Pakistan.

Just prior to my coming to the office in 1985, the Board approved the city of Karachi as the focus for such a church planting ministry, with a specific focus on the Baluchi people. After some delays in obtaining visas, Gordon and Gwen Nickel from Canada began the work and later were joined by Keiko Hamano from the Japan MB conference and by Tim and Janine Bergdahl from the US.

As a people group, the Baluch had about one million people living in Karachi, with several million more living in Baluchistan province and in other countries of central Asia. At the start of our work there were no known churches among them and few if any known Christians. Through friendship, literacy classes, and various other means, a small number of Baluch became Christians over the next decade. However, there was much suspicion and tension for the workers which made any open ministry difficult.

In 1993, I visited Karachi together with Asia Director Dale Warkentin and his wife Joyce. It is a bustling and crowded city where the Muslim call to prayer is broadly heard five times a day. We arrived during the time of Ramadan, and thus people were fasting during the day and celebrating at night. I especially remember our visit to the compound of the Church of Pakistan in downtown Karachi. It was like an island of calm in the midst of the noisy city. We stood in awe in the large cathedral, where our workers often worshipped on Sunday. Then we visited a small room in an unimpressive building where the Baluch radio broadcast was being produced in Karachi. This was done at some risk to the Pakistani personnel involved because there was opposition to the Gospel message being heard in the country. The tapes were sent out and it was broadcast from overseas by short wave radio into the region. Soon many listeners responded and asked for materials. There were even reports of groups of Baluchi believers forming into small house churches.

Not long after our visit, the Nickel family had to leave Karachi, mostly because of family concerns. The Bergdahls were able to continue the ministry whileTim studied the Farsi language at the university in Karachi. Then the Bergdahls also had to leave in 1996 when their student visa was not renewed. For a time we had no resident workers, but we continued to support the production of the radio broadcast, maintaining some contact with the ministry through other missionaries. In 1999, it again became possible to locate workers in Karachi. Craig and Bridget Hallman were sent to focus on the radio broadcast ministry and continued to serve in Karachi until security concerns caused a transfer to Dubai in 2002. Meanwhile, MBMSI has reaffirmed its commitment to work with other partners to see churches planted among the Baluch people. It is a difficult challenge and much prayer is needed to see this vision fulfilled.

Thailand

MBM/S Goals for the 1990s included entering at least one new country in Asia for mission outreach. As mentioned earlier, an exploratory trip in 1991 led to a decision to enter Thailand. Russell and Elizabeth Schmidt, who had worked with Southeast Asian refugees in Fresno during seminary, were appointed as our first missionary couple to this country. Their initial term was for further research, exploring options for ministry among students in Bangkok as well as among the tribal groups living in the North. The result was a decision to work among the Khmu people who were living in villages in the Nan and Chiang Rai provinces. Many of them had fled Laos as refugees. The Schmidts located in Nan province from where they had reasonable access to several of the villages.

My first visit to Thailand was in 1971 as a tourist. It was a stop on our round-the-world trip from Kinshasa. We only visited Bangkok and were impressed by the complexity and beauty of Thai culture. My second visit was in 1993, together with our Asia Secretary, Dale Warkentin and his wife Joyce. We flew to the northern city of Chiang Mai, where Russell met us and then went by bus to their home in Nan province. The Khmu villages reminded me of those in which we worked in Panama. They build their houses from materials in the forest, with thatched roofs and floors elevated off the ground on stilts. Their farming methods were mostly slash and burn. Their children were anxious to pursue an education but, just as in Panama, they had little opportunity and few resources to do that beyond primary grades.

The Schmidts developed a ministry approach that incorporated village evangelism, educational opportunity, and agricultural development. A student hostel was established where Khmu youth could live and attend high school. Several Khmu men were sent for Bible school studies in the city of Chiang Mai and became effective pastors and evangelists in their villages. Later, the Schmidts were joined by Fritz and Susi Peters who further focused the development aspects of the ministry. Over a decade of ministry, a number of new Khmu congregations were planted and others were strengthened. Our family was also connected to the work when our daughter, Carmen, went as part of a YMI ACTION team to Nan in 1995. They assisted the Schmidts in the work with the Khmu and taught English in local schools. Carmen returned from that summer

of service with a sense that God was calling her to mission in Thailand.

Then in 1998 I was visited in my office by a young lady, Karen Huebert Sanchez, whose husband Ricky was completing a study program at the seminary in Fresno. They had served short-term in Thailand with YWAM, and she shared a vision to form a team to go back to Thailand for church planting among Thai people. I asked if she would make a commitment of at least ten years, and she agreed. Over the next two years a team of three families was formed with that commitment. Of special consequence to our family was that it included our daughter Carmen and her husband Andy Owen. The other couple to join was Dave and Louise Sinclair-Peters from BC. They trained in Fresno in the summer of 2000 and then did church deputation as a team through the fall. Team 2000 left for Thailand in January 2001 and spent their first year in language study at the OMF school in Lopburi.

As I write, Helen and I have just completed our fourth visit to the team. During the first, in Lopburi, various members shared their struggle with learning the difficult Thai language. But they persevered and in 2002 moved to the city of Chonburi, south of Bangkok. There they developed relationships, taught English, and opened a friendship center near the university. During our third visit, in January 2005, we saw The Life Center which had recently been dedicated on a major street of Bang Saen, a Chonburi suburb that attracts many visitors. Shortly after, they celebrated their first baptism. The Lord continued to draw people to himself. On another visit in February 2006, we participated in services on two Sundays at The Life Center. It was nearly full with both seekers and new believers. A daughter church is being planted in the nearby town of Phanat Nikom. Thailand has had Christian missionaries for more than a hundred years, but has seen only limited response. The response to the ministry of Team 2000 may indicate that it is time for a harvest in this mostly Buddhist country.

During a visit to Thailand in April of 2003, Helen and I spent a few days on the beach at the southern resort town of Phuket. We enjoy snorkeling and had a wonderful experience there. Then, when we visited with Team 2000 in Chonburi, I was given another challenge by Karen: Why did MBMSI not consider increasing its presence in Thailand by placing teams in a variety of locations? I shared her challenge with our staff and Board and as a result additional openings for missionaries were

approved in the north and the eastern areas of Thailand. Shortly thereafter the Schmidts returned to Chiang Mai to resume some ministry with the Khmu, but also to expore new church plants among the northern Thai.

Then, in late December of 2004, the major Southeast Asian tsunami hit the beaches of Thailand in the region of Phuket. In response two members of Team 2000, Ricky Sanchez and Andy Owen, together with members of a short-term TREK team, went to Phang Nga, just north of Phuket, to help in the recovery of bodies. The scene was challenging but a vision was born in Ricky's heart for Operation Rebuilding Lives. Over the next 9 months more than 200 North American volunteers were sent through MBMSI to assist in the building of some 25 houses on Kho Khao island near Phang Nga. Their witness and follow-up by a Thai pastor friend has resulted in a core group of believers on the island. A new team of three families headed to Thailand in the Spring of 2006. After language study, they expected to spearhead the new church planting effort in the southern city of Phuket.

Other Ministries in Asia with MBMSI Connections

Mission Partnerships

In 1972 Mennonite Central Committee responded to the intense physical needs in **Bangladesh**. Shortly thereafter, MBM/S sent two nurses, formerly working in India, to serve under MCC in the Saidpur area. Since there were spiritual needs as well as physical ones, additional help was requested. The India MB conference sent a couple to help for one term.

In 1977, BOMAS went on record to start a church planting ministry in the Saidpur area. It was hoped that this new ministry would be started with leadership from the Asia Mennonite Conference. However, in 1978, it became clear that leadership would need to come from MBM/S, and thus such a recommendation was made to the MB conference. Over the next six years, several attempts were made to begin such a ministry. However, a mission charter was never sought. Workers continued to be seconded to MCC until 1985, when the last of the nurses present there retired.

Kazakhstan, a former republic of the USSR in Central Asia, be-

came home to a large number of Mennonite Brethren who were sent there in exile from the Ukraine to work in the coal mines. During my 1991 trip to the USSR, our team visited the large MB church in the city of Karaganda. It was amazing to see their joy and creativity in the midst of difficult conditions. The city was covered with coal dust and many parts were sinking due to the removal of coal underground. But the MB church was filled with people and they were involved in mission, including the operation of a printing press in the city to produce Christian literature. MBM/S gave some assistance to this project.

Another church visit on that trip was to a Baptist church in the city of Pavlodar, near the border of Kazakhstan with the Siberian steppes of Russia. We arrived on Saturday afternoon and were welcomed to the home of one of the church elders. Sunday morning, as we prepared for church, I was reminded not to put on a tie. It was considered "worldly" by this unregistered congregation. Then on the way walking to church, I was told that I should also remove the gold wedding band from my finger. That too was considered worldly. I struggled with that, but finally put it in my pocket. We gave greetings in the service and were interviewed by the church elders to determine who would be allowed to preach Sunday evening. Three of the four of us passed the test. One answered incorrectly to the question, "What should you do if you're walking down the street and saw a Pentecostal coming toward you?" The right answer was not to give him a "hug" but rather to "cross to the other side of the street!" Legalism was alive and well in those churches that had lived through the intense persecution of the Soviet era.

Since 1997, MBMSI has had a Mission Associate in the capital city of Alma Ata, working as a vocational missionary. He has been employed by an international oil company and also involved in a variety of independent business ventures. Through his contacts with Kazakh professionals, he has been able to give witness and to disciple new believers among them. New congregations are forming for these new believers, because the older ones cannot seem to bridge the gap from their legalistic past. Both YMI and DMI have also sent short term teams to work in this city.

Kyrgyzstan, another central Asian republic of the former Soviet Union, had a number of Mennonite Brethren believers from the Ukraine who settled in the city of Frunze. While worshipping as part of the lo-

cal Baptist church, some of them had begun an "underground" outreach mission known as the Ray of Hope. In cooperation with German partners, MBM/S had provided some financial support for this ministry, and in October 1991, just prior to the collapse of the USSR, I was part of an MBM/S and German team to visit Frunze.

Because of "glasnost," the Ray of Hope mission was already operating more openly and many of the Kyrgyz people were coming to Christ. They were producing printed materials for discipleship and also sponsoring some social service projects. We were amazed by their creativity and sacrifice in carrying on this mission effort. Living conditions were primitive compared to western standards, with no indoor plumbing in their homes. I lodged with Elder Henry Barg and was impressed by the large garden in their backyard that supplemented their food supply.

After the collapse of the USSR, the city of Frunze became Bishkek and the work of Ray of Hope expanded even further. They established a Bible school to train Kyrgyz workers and continued to plant churches, in spite of some increase in persecution from Muslim extremists. MBMSI continued to provide some financial support and occasional short term teachers from North America over the next decade in a partnership with the Ray of Hope mission.

Tajikistan is another central Asian nation that became independent of the Soviet Union in 1992. In the late 1990s an MB couple was serving in Dushanbe as MBMSI Mission Associates under joint appointment with another agency.

Uzbekistan was also one of the central Asian countries that gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1992. Our presence there was that of a Mission Associate couple, Richard and Anne Penner, involved in social ministries both here and in Afghanistan from 2000 to 2003. As mentioned earlier, Richard was killed in a plane crash in Tashkent and is buried there.

Following the collapse of Communist rule, a number of mission agencies have entered **Mongolia** for ministry. MBMSI did not join in an inter-Mennonite team there, nor did it initially develop a program of its own. However, we have appointed a Mission Associate family working in partnership with another agency, serving in social ministries and working with children's clubs. Plans were made to send short-term teams as well as to expand long-term ministry.

As a result of the merger of the KMB conference with the MB conference in 1960, some missionaries which the KMB mission committee had seconded to other mission agencies in Asia became the responsibility of MBM/S. Such was the case of Dr. Maynard and Dorothy Seaman, working under T.E.A.M. in **Nepal**. That appointment was strongly reaffirmed in 1981, along with a commitment to facilitate the training of public health workers and the building of a new hospital at Dandeldhura. The latter was accomplished largely with funding from the Canadian International Development Agency, or CIDA.

A number of projects were completed in Nepal with such funding over the following decade and the Seamans continued with both a medical and a spiritual ministry. However, increasing scrutiny of Christian workers resulted in the denial of their visa in 1989. They were able to serve a term in **Sri Lanka**, and then when conditions became more open, they returned to Nepal for a final term of service between 1992 and 1994.

United Arab Emirates, a small country on the Persian Gulf has provided a doorway for a variety of ministries in this region of the world, touching both the Middle East and Central Asia. Our presence there began in 1996 with the appointment of a Mission Associate couple from Manitoba to pastor the international church in Dubai. Their ministry which began with a focus on English speaking expatriates has since broadened to include a number of other expatriate people groups. MBMSI has assisted them in raising special funds for a major evangelical church center.

In 2002 that church was able to assist us with visas for our MBMSI workers formerly located in Pakistan. Thus they were able to relocate their base for the radio ministry to Dubai after a serious deterioration of security for Americans in Karachi. As a part of this approach, one of the Pakistani radio workers also relocated to Dubai. Plans were moving forward to establish a studio there. However, they have encountered some challenges in working from this location as well. While the ministry continues, there are some questions about the long-term viability of basing the work there.

Short-Term Teams

I never had the opportunity to visit **Australia,** though I often wished

to include it on my itinerary. And while no MB church planting activity has been planned for Australia, we have sent short-term workers there. Samir Youssef has visited to encourage Arabic speaking believers. In 2003, a (DMI) team went to Australia to assist local churches in door-to-door evangelism.

Our direct involvement in mission ministry in **Jordan** has been mostly limited to the placing of YMI short-term mission teams there. There are also listeners to the Arabic radio and television broadcasts living in Jordan. Thus Samir Youssef has made some visits for follow-up and video work.

Fiji, a small island county in the South Pacific has been the focus of numerous DMI teams since about 1995. The teams participate in door-to-door evangelism with a number of local churches. And finally, MBMSI has facilitated door-to-door evangelism teams in **New Zealand** through Disciple Making International.

Non-Resident Missionaries

MBMSI has never had resident missionaries in the country of **Laos**, but significant numbers of village churches have emerged there that identify themselves as a part of our global MB family of faith. The churches are among the Khmu people group and are largely the result of the itinerant ministry of Pastor PhoneKeo Keovilay. PhoneKeo was an official in the Lao army at the time of the Vietnam war and along with other tribal people participated with the US military in the war effort. However, when Laos fell to the Communists, he was imprisoned and nearly died while in solitary confinement. After his release, he became a Christian. Then, after some years, he crossed the Mekong river as a refugee in Thailand.

After moving to California, PhoneKeo received a call to pastor the congregation of Khmu believers meeting at the Butler Church, my own home church in Fresno. He has served them now for over 14 years. However, with support through MBMSI, PhoneKeo also continues to minister to his own people in Laos and northern Thailand. Through his preaching ministry by tape and his periodic month-long visits to his homeland, many have accepted Christ and new churches have been formed. Until recently, there was widespread persecution of Christian believers and many local church leaders were put in prison. PhoneKeo

was able to make an appeal for greater freedom to government leaders during their visit to Fresno in 2005. Recent reports indicate that there may now be more openness and that the Khmu churches in Laos are growing.

In 1989, the Board agreed to research the possibility of expanding MBM/S ministries to the **Philippines** along with its ongoing research in Thailand. A visit by Victor Adrian and Dale Warkentin led to a recommendation to pursue the Thailand option, and thus MB church planting in the Philippines was put on hold.

However, two developments in the mid-1990s led to a resumption of interest in church planting in this country. First, starting in 1996, a number of DMI teams went to the Philippines for door-to-door evangelism with other evangelical churches. This led to the planting of some new independent churches that expressed interest in affiliation with the Mennonite Brethren. Not long after, a Philippino pastor, John Culaniban, began working with the MB churches in Bakersfield, California, where he lives with his family. He also began making regular visits back to the Philippines for ministry. In 2003, he was appointed as a non-resident missionary under MBMSI. He has organized several churches and has also sponsored seminars on Anabaptism given by professors from the Fresno seminary. Efforts to form an MB conference in the Philippines continue.

Chapter Twelve

EUROPE

I first visited Europe in 1969. Helen and I made brief stops in London and Amsterdam on our way to serve as MK teachers in the Congo. Over the next four years, we made several additional visits to Europe as we traveled to and from Kinshasa, but each time our focus was more on tourism than on mission. Still, those visits gave me a cultural context for my later administrative consultation visits as Secretary for Iberia and as General Director with MBMSI. In those roles, I made at least ten more visits to Europe between 1986 and 2003. Some were for consultation with missionaries and national church leaders. Others were to attend various conference events. I want to reflect on my observations and on the changes in which I played a role during those years.

Austria

Mennonite Brethren mission to Western Europe from North America was focused on war-ravaged Austria and Germany following the end of World War II. A number of Mennonite Brethren worked in relief efforts and some stayed on to continue efforts to reach people with spiritual food as well. Linz in Austria along with Neustadt and Neuwied in Germany were centers for this activity. Through evangelistic efforts a group of believers was soon meeting in the Linz area. Later, property was purchased in the town of Linz and this became the first of the MB churches in Austria. The work spread to Wels, to Vienna, to Steyr, to Strasburg, and to Enns. The early stages are described in the book by Phyllis Martens, *The Mustard Tree.*

As mentioned earlier, my first visit to Austria was as a tourist in 1972, and though we did visit the town of Enns, we didn't visit any of the MB churches at that time. In 1998, Helen and I again visited Austria, arriving in Vienna by train from Dresden. We stayed with members of the church there. Our next stop was Gmunden, where we met missionaries Richard and Hazel Funk who had planted a church there. Then we traveled to Steyr, where Franz Rathmair had established our MBMSI European office some five years earlier. He was also pastor of the church there, which like most of the MB churches in Austria was small

and growing slowly. Franz described for us the challenges of planting Anabaptist churches within the strong Catholic mindset of the Austrian culture. But in spite of their small numbers, the MB churches of Austria seem to be committed and faithful.

In January 2003, I was again in Austria. This time it was at the end of my trip with Tim Bergdahl, following up a major evaluation of our work in Europe. We again spent time in Steyr, this time to recognize and honor Franz for his ten years of service as the MBMSI Europe Director. We also had a meeting with the Austrian MB leadership in which we discussed the options for their involvement in global mission. They shared of some outreach being done in neighboring Slovenia. We were also able to spend some time in Salzburg with Richard and Hazel Funk, our only remaining MBMSI missionaries in Austria. They too have experienced the challenges of slow growth and a variety of conflicts in the Salzburg MB church, but they were optimistic that the churches will survive and even prosper over the long run.

Germany

In 1967, the Board recognized the cultural differences that existed between the churches in Austria and Germany and began moves toward dealing with the work as separate fields. Meanwhile, a number of workers had been active in radio work and questions were being raised about its effectiveness. Following a broad study, the Board moved in 1970 toward focusing more resources on direct church planting efforts.

MB mission efforts in Germany over the next three decades can be viewed as having four distinct streams. The early work in Neuwied and Neustadt became part of an MB conference which centered in northwestern Germany known as the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Mennonitischer Bruedergemeinden* (AMBD). It includes some congregations that consist largely of immigrants who left Paraguay to return to their roots in Germany. Other congregations, such as the large and growing church in Bielefeld, have made major impact within the majority German cultural group. At least two former MBM/S missionary couples now pastor churches within this conference.

The AMBD conference has developed a vision for outreach and mission. Thus they have sponsored outreach ministries among nearby immigrant groups from Turkey and other countries, with some financial

support from MBM/S. Then in 1991, MBM/S agreed to partner with the AMBD in launching a new church planting effort in the former East Germany. This effort was launched in the city of Dresden by missionaries Lawrence and Selma Warkentin. It has grown to include several congregations and today is pastored by a German pastor.

Following a visit I made with Helen to Berlin in 1998, MBMSI also negotiated with the AMBD to partner in a new church planting effort there. Again, the Warkentins launched this effort, but were soon replaced by a young German couple who had completed training in Canada. During another visit to Berlin in 2003, we noted that this church plant was also making good progress, though it was still without adequate facilities. We also briefly visited the third church planting location of this initiative in the city of Leipzig, where another German couple is working to gather a group of believers, so far with limited results.

A third stream of MB mission in Germany since the late 1970s relates to church planting efforts in the mostly Catholic region of the south known as Bavaria. This too was largely the vision of missionaries Lawrence and Selma Warkentin. A team of missionaries has worked during three decades to establish a cluster of churches there. They were organized into a separate conference known as the *Verband Mennonitischer Bruedergemeinden in Bayern* (VMBB). While the work expanded, most churches remained small and dependent on outside resources. In 1990, an urban church plant was launched in the large city of Munich, with the appointment of missionaries Rod and Julia Zook. However, this effort also made slow progress and by 2005 was no longer active.

My personal encounter with the Bavarian MB churches came near the end of the 1998 visit that Helen and I made to Europe. We arrived in Bavaria to participate in the annual meeting of ICOMB. We were warmly received and hosted by the believers there and also shown some of the symbols of their long history and culture. Especially impressive were the buildings in the small town where we stayed which were over 600 years old. Following the ICOMB meeting, we stayed to participate in the triennial Pentecost Conference of the German speaking MB churches of Europe. It was a joyous celebration held in a large public hall with inspiring music and preaching.

A fourth stream of MB mission in Germany relates to the large number of German background immigrants arriving from the former Soviet

Union, starting in the 1960s until the present. This migration of thousands includes many who had been a part of the Mennonite Brethren in the past. Many groups of these believers formed new congregations in Germany, some of which used the name Mennonite Brethren but remained independent. However, a group of congregations, some that had identified themselves as MB in Russia, and others who had been Baptist there, formed a conference that became known as the *Bund Taufgesinnter Gemeinden* (BTG). I first visited the BTG leaders following our trip to Russia in 1991. We signed a partnership agreement to seek to work together in mission. This conference has formed a mission agency known as LOGOS which has become a partner with MBMSI for ministry back to the Ukraine and some other parts of the former Soviet Union. MBMSI has also continued to partner with the BTG in theological education by providing some faculty for their seminary in Bonn.

In 1995, a comprehensive evaluation of the MBM/S work in Germany and Austria was carried out by Bernhard Ott, a graduate of MBBS in Fresno and teacher at the Bienenburg Bible School in Switzerland. The report challenged MBM/S to address several weaknesses in our mission efforts. One was the lack of church planting experience for many of our newer missionaries. He suggested we recruit experienced mentors and work with national workers in new church plants. Ott also pointed out the need for greater theological unity in our preparation of leaders. He suggested that a stronger focus on our Anabaptist roots in Western Europe would be important in the training of leaders and in developing the MB identity in German-speaking Europe.

Lithuania

In 1989, as conditions in the Soviet Union were changing, the Board of MBM/S instructed the staff to explore new opportunities for mission in the USSR. Then, in 1990, Lithuania was one of three Baltic countries to declare its independence. A Winnipeg businessman, Arthur DeFehr, had contacts in Lithuania and proposed a partnership to provide an ESL teaching program in the city of Panavezys in the summer of 1991. In May 1991, MBM/S agreed to provide an umbrella for sending those teachers and also to provide a couple for a six-month ministry of follow-up that could potentially see a church started. That effort resulted in a small group of English speakers gathering for Bible study and worship.

That initial commitment grew as two more couples were sent for two-year terms in 1992, working with the emerging Lithuania Christian College. Because of opposition from the Catholic Church in Panavezys, the program was moved to the coastal city of Klaipeda. In March of 1993, I visited our workers there, along with MBM/S Program Director, Dave Dyck. As a result of that visit, a recommendation was processed with both the MBM/S Board and the General Conference later that year to make a long-term commitment to ministry in Lithuania, in partnership with the Lithuania Christian Charity Fund. Following the approval of that direction, MBM/S sent three long-term missionary couples to Lithuania to work with the emerging church plants and in training leaders for those churches.

The efforts to plant churches by North American missionaries in Panavezys and in Klaipeda brought mixed results. While churches did emerge, it seems that our workers did not remain long enough to help in a transition to stable Lithuanian leadership. When Helen and I made another visit to Lithuania in May of 1998, both efforts had experienced a variety of conflicts. And while the initial intent was to plant Mennonite Brethren churches, to date they have not chosen to adopt that specific identity. They have, however, sent observers to some ICOMB meetings as they learn to know the global MB family.

MBMSI has maintained involvement in the efforts to train Lithuanian leaders through two channels. In Klaipeda, where LCC has emerged as a major Christian liberal arts college in the region, MBMSI has continued to supply some faculty and work teams through its short-term and Mission Associate categories. However, MBMSI is no longer active as a part of the LCC Board. The focus for training pastors and other local church leaders has shifted partially to the Evangelical Bible Institute in the town of Siuliau. A couple from the German MB churches serves there as missionaries in joint appointment with MBMSI.

Portugal

In 1984, at a General Conference convention in Reedley, approval was given for MBM/S to begin new mission activity in Portugal with the goal of establishing Mennonite Brethren churches. By 1986 I had been given administrative responsibility for Iberia, and thus made a visit to the city of Lisbon, together with Victor Adrian. We visited Manual and

Anne Franco from Montreal, who were attending Bible School in the Loures area near Lisbon. Together with them, we explored a number of possible locations to begin a work and agreed to recommend the area of Santo Adriao/ Flamenga, near Loures. We also met with a Portuguese worker, in another area of the city, who was being sponsored by Canadian and Swiss Mennonite agencies. They had a relief ministry going among immigrants from former Portuguese colonies in Africa.

When the Krugers arrived as our first missionaries to Portugal in 1987, they located in a rented apartment in nearby Infantado, since nothing was available in the target area. However, to facilitate the arrival of the Francos upon their return from Canada, an apartment was purchased in Quinta das Flores which then became the focus of the new church planting effort. Later, when the Krugers left after one term, Otto & Marjorie Ekk occupied their apartment in Infantado and have remained there to the present as team leaders. However, no church plant has emerged in that residential complex.

Over the first ten years of ministry, the congregation in Quinta das Flores grew slowly with missionary leadership. A storefront was purchased by MBM/S near the Franco's apartment which increased visibility and facilitated regular worship services. Several other missionary couples joined the team along the way, including some from Brazil, and participated in encouraging this congregation. In 1995, the Francos left Portugal and the Ekks took primary responsibility for this ministry.

Meanwhile, contact continued with the immigrant work that had been sponsored by the Swiss Mennonites across town. While primarily a social ministry, a group of believers had emerged and began to seek connections with the MB work. By the time of our visit in 2003, their Angolan pastor had joined the MBMSI team in uniting this work with the emerging Portuguese MB conference. Also, the LOGOS mission from the BTG in Germany sent a missionary couple in 2003 to begin work among Russian immigrants. A group of believers has formed and now meets in the Quinta das Flores facility.

In 1998, Craig and Fabiana Jost, who had ministered in southern Brazil, were approved as missionaries to Portugal with a focus on starting a new church plant. A location was chosen between the original site and the Angolan congregation in a heavily populated area of residential high rise apartments called Massama. Small groups have gathered for

Bible study but a congregation has not yet emerged. They were joined by a Portuguese couple in 2004 and have rented a storefront to increase visibility and options for ministry. With the Quinta das Flores congregation finally in the hands of Portuguese leadership, the Ekks assited in this work on their return from furlough in early 2006. Meanwhile, the Josts have decided to end their ministry in Portugal.

Our two decades of experience with MB mission in Portugal have not been met with the kind of response that was projected in the original vision. It was projected that the Portuguese would respond to an evangelical Anabaptist presentation of the Gospel much more readily than had been our experience earlier in Spain. The policy statement in 1986 projected a cluster of MB churches in the Lisbon and the formation of a strong national conference. Twenty years later there are two small groups of believers and an emerging MB conference structure. However, both groups include a large number of immigrants rather than being rooted in the majority Portuguese culture.

It is difficult to identify any single reason for our lack of rapid progress toward the original vision for MB mission in Portugal. Two major evaluations of the work by outside evaluators were done in 1997 and in 2002. Certainly the fairly frequent turnover in missionary personnel was detrimental to the stability of the effort. At least four couples served only one term there. Otto and Marjorie Ekk have been the major exception to this pattern. In reviewing the evaluation report in 1997, the Board of MBMSI took a number of actions intended to strengthen the first congregation at Quinta Das Flores, while also exploring options for starting work in another location. However, it was seven years later before Portuguese leadership for that congregation emerged.

The original projection of a more rapid response to the Gospel in Portugal than in Spain has led to considerable tension for missionaries and for the home administration. Many in the constituency began to ask why we had invested so heavily in Portugal and had seen so little result. The second evaluation in 2002, which raised questions about strategy, led to further tensions between the missionaries, the evaluator, and the MBMSI administration. The fact remains that Portuguese culture, like that of Spain, is rooted in the religiosity of Catholicism and today is focused on economic advancement within the European Union. It remains to be seen if the original projection of a cluster of MB churches and a

strong conference can be achieved in this third decade of MB mission in Portugal.

Russia

As mentioned earlier, my first and only visit to Russia was in October of 1991. Russia was still a part of the Soviet Union at that time and the goal of our four-member team was to explore partnerships with existing MB churches and with MB rooted believers in other churches. We passed briefly through Moscow as we went by taxi from one airport to another on our entry into the USSR. One clear sign of the "glasnost" opening to the West was the McDonald's we passed on one side of Red Square.

The first church visit we made in Russia was in the small city of Slavgorod in the Altai region of Siberia. Only later did I discover through news reports that this was the region where the USSR had dumped much of its radioactive waste. As we entered the town in our van, traveling with two MB church leaders from Karaganda, we met a man on a bicycle. Our driver asked if he could direct us to the local church. He couldn't, but did give directions to a house he said was occupied by a believer. We went there and were taken to the home of Elder Peter Isaac, where we were welcomed and given lodging. Somehow, this family learned that the next day was my birthday, and the next morning at breakfast it was celebrated, including a gift of a small Russian wooden doll figure. For me it was an amazing reminder that we are a global family.

Elder Isaac showed us the clapboard building in which they met for worship. It had been dismantled by Soviet authorities, but was rebuilt by the believers. Then Isaac took us to another part of town where in an era of "glasnost," a new cement block church building was under construction. The new sanctuary held about 400 people. He said local folks laughed at them because their number had declined to about 100, with believers leaving for a better life in Germany. But Elder Isaac stated, "We are committed to evangelism of Russian people in this town, and thus we are building for the future of the church." It was a strong testimony to their vision for mission.

Our next stop in Russia was in the former Mennonite Brethren villages to the west of the city of Omsk, Siberia. There we were welcomed

and lodged in the home of Elder Nicolai Dueckman. The evening we arrived he made one phone call to alert other church leaders of our visit. The next evening we traveled to a neighboring village for a service with some 40 church leaders from the area. Each of the four on our visiting team brought greetings and a short message. Then there was time for questions and discussion about the church in Russia and the church in the West. As midnight approached, the four of us were put in a line as each of the 40 elders came by to bid us farewell with a "holy kiss," a practice they had continued from the early days of the MB church.

Back at Elder Dueckman's home, we had our nighttime snack at about 2:00 a.m. and heard about their outreach ministry in the area. He told us of the feeding of the five thousand. During the warmer season they had organized an open-air evangelism campaign under the shade of the beautiful white birch forest in the area. Some five thousand people had come for the all-day event, and they fed them lunch under the trees. Many had become believers and were being discipled.

Elder Dueckman also told us his own story of persecution. More than once he had been jailed and beaten for having led the church in public worship. Once, having been beaten severely, he was sent home to die. But he had managed to leave his bed and join the other believers who were meeting secretly at the church for prayer. Now, in these times of "glasnost," he had taken a Bible to the jailer who had beaten him. We provided some financial support to the outreach efforts of Elder Dueckman and the Omsk area churches. Dueckman was also able to attend a couple of conferences in Canada during this period to share his story.

The decade of the 1990s was also a period in which MBM/S sent a number of North American workers to Russia. Fraternal visitors went for short periods of ministry with the Omsk area churches. Several professors were also sent for short-term teaching assignments in St. Petersburg. In 1994, Jon and Mary Anne Isaak began a one-year teaching assignment at the St. Petersburg Christian University. They were followed by Andrew and Julie Hershey-Bergen in a three-year Good News Intern assignment which included Russian language study. Following their service, MBMSI continued to provide funding for a number of Russian teachers at SPCU.

Herb and Maureen Klaassen spent some time in Moscow with MCC as hosts for emigrants passing through the capital. In late 1994, MBM/S

asked them to explore opportunities for church planting in Moscow and their possible involvement. By 1996, MBM/S had agreed to partner with other Mennonite agencies to establish a Moscow Mennonite Center. From 1996-99, Don and Evelyn Loewen served as director couple for the Center, hosting visitors and providing Anabaptist resources to a variety of Russian inquirers. However, the vision for church planting never moved forward and the Center was closed in 2000.

During this same period, another Canadian couple, Kevin and Lena Hamm, relocated to St. Petersburg as MBMSI Mission Associates, in partnership with Christian Camping International/Russia (CCI). Another MB-rooted agency in Canada, Kingdom Ventures, had developed a key program for the founding of Christian camps using the facilities of former Communist youth camps. The Hamms continue to serve as resource persons for the camping ministries in the former Soviet Union. In 2003, during our partnership meetings with LOGOS Germany, we discussed a plan for a more active church planting effort in St. Petersburg involving the Hamms as a part of the team. However, I am not aware that any significant progress has been made to date to move that vision forward.

Spain

In 1973, the Board of MBM/S approved an investigative visit to Spain to explore the possibility of sending workers for long-term church planting in that country. By the end of 1975, the General Conference had approved the placement of long-term missionaries in Madrid. It was felt that the end of the Franco dictatorship had brought a new era of openness to Spanish society that would allow for more ready response to an MB church planting effort. A team was formed, which at one time included Ernest Friesen and Hugo Zorrilla, former workers in Colombia, both of whom would later serve on the MBM/S Board, and Ron Penner, who later served in Mexico and then on the MBMSI Fresno staff.

The placement of experienced pastors, teachers, and church planters as missionaries was a deliberate strategy for what was envisioned as a cluster of MB churches in Madrid. Other shorter term personnel were added as the work progressed. For a time, the two church plants in the Bellas Vistas and Saconia districts of Madrid did show growth and considerable promise. In 1984 a decision was made to open a new third out-

reach effort in the growing suburb of Tres Cantos, led by Ron and Fran Penner. However, by the time of my visit to Madrid in 1989 with then Board member, Ernie Friesen, a decision had been made to reduce the size of the missionary team and to close the Saconia storefront ministry which was in decline.

By 1991, administrative responsibility for Spain had shifted to the new Europe Secretary, Jacob Thielmann. He was instructed to re-evaluate the assignments of the remaining three missionary units in the Madrid area. Over the next two years it became increasingly clear that our mission efforts had not yet resulted in a reproducing cluster of MB churches. Further review and discussion led to a rather dramatic decision by the Board of MBM/S in April of 1993. A decision was made not to reappoint any of the then current long-term personnel to Spain. It was further agreed that a "Spain Review Team" led by Paul Hiebert give high priority to a review of our mission efforts in Spain.

Unfortunately, that Review Team never materialized and the evaluation was delayed until early 1994, done by an outside evaluator. By that time, the workers whose reappointment had been denied and the few remaining leaders of the Spanish MB Church were experiencing considerable confusion and pain. In reviewing the evaluation report, the Board tended to agree with the evaluators recommendation that an interval of at least five years pass before offering further MBM/S personnel to the MB church in Spain. One of our missionary couples, Lynn and Mary Kauffman, continued some work in Saconia as Mission Associates, in partnership with another mission agency. However, except for a couple of brief visits by other staff, no further mission personnel have been sent to date.

Not having lived in Spain nor participated directly in the work there, I hesitate to draw any final conclusions as to why our MB mission efforts in Spain failed to produced the anticipated results. Just as was later the case in Portugal, the initial projections of a ready response to the presentation of the gospel by Anabaptists were not accurate. Spanish culture has a long history of Catholic religiosity. People could not easily see the gospel as presented by our missionaries as a better option. It would seem that an early transition from missionary leadership to Spanish leaders who had been working with other groups also led to tension and divisions.

Perhaps only eternity will reveal the net result of our 20 years of MB mission effort in Spain. I don't believe there is any remaining remnant of the congregations that were started in Saconia and in Bellas Vistas. The property purchased in Bellas Vistas for the Spanish MB Church was sold, with the proceeds going to purchase another property where several members lived in Torrejon. However, there are reports of that small group also disbanding. One bright spot from the years since the MBMSI withdrawal is that the church plant in the suburb of Tres Cantos was taken over by another mission and today there is a viable and growing church there.

Ukraine

The story of MB mission in the Ukraine is the story of the Mennonite Brethren Church coming full circle. By the mid-1800s, the Mennonite immigrants from central Europe had prospered economically in their closed agricultural communities of southern Russia. They had built their own German-speaking schools and churches and were mostly isolated from the broader society around them. They were restricted from engaging in open evangelism of their Russian neighbors by agreements made with the Russian government.

The time was ripe for revival within the Mennonite Church. One expression of that revival was the formation in 1860 of a movement that became known as the Mennonite Brethren. From the start, it was committed to evangelism and mission. The movement quickly spread within the colonies and beyond. Within ten years some of these Mennonite Brethren had left Russia and spread the movement to the central United States. Within 30 years of its start, the Mennonite Brethren from Ukraine had begun foreign mission work in India.

Intense persecution of Christians in the Soviet Union caused many more Mennonites and Mennonite Brethren to leave for North America, South America, and Germany in the 20th century. And while there were revival movements within each of these streams of Mennonites, the historical divisions that began in the Ukraine remained. As each group launched more intense global mission efforts, based mostly in North America, the various denominational connections were further spread around the world.

In the early 1990s the Soviet Union collapsed and the area of the former Mennonite colonies became a new sovereign country called Ukraine. Few, if any, Mennonites were left in the area. But the memory of their earlier presence was still very much respected and many Baptist churches credited their existence to earlier Mennonite Brethren evangelism. Several mission and service agencies from Europe and North America, including MBMSI, began outreach efforts in the Ukraine among the Ukrainian people. Several small churches were emerging and by the year 2002, some of us in mission leadership asked, "Could these efforts be coordinated in such a way as to result in a single new evangelical Mennonite identity in the new Ukraine?"

In January of 2003, I traveled with Tim Bergdahl to central Germany for a meeting with representatives of LOGOS Germany and WITNESS, the mission agency of the Mennonite Church of Canada. Each of us was already involved with mission work in the Ukraine. After hearing updates on the work and sharing our vision for further mission effort, we agreed that seeking to form a single umbrella conference in Ukraine was a worthy goal. The just completed ICOMB Confession of Faith was suggested as a basis for the new conference. The mission agencies were in agreement. But this vision would need a response from those in the emerging churches in the Ukraine.

In May of 2004, Tim Bergdahl traveled with DMI Director, James Nikkel, to the Ukraine representing MBMSI. They participated in meetings together with other mission leaders and with the local church leaders of the four organized local churches. There was agreement to seek to work more closely together and to form the Evangelical Mennonite Conference of the Ukraine. With that decision, the Mennonite Brethren Church had returned to the Ukraine, nearly a century and a half after it was born there. And it would again be a part of the larger Mennonite movement in that land. New church planting activity is underway and will connect to the new conference.

Other Ministries in Europe with MBMSI Connections

Mission Partnerships

While we have never launched church planting efforts or sent short-term teams to **Belgium**, many of our MBM/S missionaries have been

temporary residents there. That is because up to one year of French language study in Belgium was often the first stop for a missionary headed to the Congo.

The formation of a significant evangelical seminary in **Prague, Czech Republic** following its emergence from communist rule has brought missionary professors to the city. A former MB leader from Russia and graduate from MBBS is on the faculty. MBMSI placed a Canadian couple in 2002 for one term as MK teachers at an associated international school for children. Together with Program Director Tim Bergdahl, I attended a consultation at the seminary in Prague in 2003, focused on mission to Eastern Europe.

In 1967, the MB Board of Missions went on record that it was not considered advisable to send students from Congo to study in **France**. However, a number of students from the Congo did complete Master's Degree there. In recent years, MBMSI has sponsored a Canadian couple serving as Mission Associates based in the Paris area. They are involved in music/worship ministries throughout France, in other parts of Europe, and even in North Africa. There is potential to expand this ministry to Muslim background people from a base in France.

While Mennonite Brethren have not sent resident missionaries to **Switzerland** through MBMSI, we have supported the training of church leaders at the Bible School and Seminary at Bienenburg. This has included both financial support and some short-term teachers. It should also be noted that in 1974, MBM/S negotiated an agreement with the Swiss Mennonite Mission agency (SMEK) to work in partnership at church planting in the city of Vienna, Austria.

Short-Term Teams

Over the past two decades a number of possible involvements have been explored in **England** as an opportunity for service in an English speaking context. Other Mennonite agencies established a Mennonite Center in London. However, our only involvement from MBMSI so far has been with short-term teams.

A short term team serving with Youth Mission International has served in **Ireland** in partnership with a local agency.

Chapter Thirteen

LATIN AMERICA

Since first arriving in Colombia in 1966, I have had more extensive and frequent involvement with MB mission in Latin America than on any other continent. I have lived a total of ten years in three of its countries; during our time of Christian Service in Colombia; during language study in Costa Rica; and during missionary service in Panama. During my six years as Latin America Secretary, I traveled extensively through all of the countries where MBM/S had significant mission connections. Later, as General Director, I continued to travel to Latin America in relation to special consultations and events. I will reflect on the changes I've observed and in which I've participated as a part of MB mission over a 40 year period.

Brazil

Brazil is the Latin American country with the largest territory and the largest population, and yet it does not use Spanish, the common language of the others. Because of early Portuguese colonial influence, its national language is Portuguese. However, because it is surrounded by Spanish-speaking neighbors, Latin American Spanish is widely understood. During my six visits to Brazil between 1986 and 2004, I learned to communicate in "Portuñol," a version of Spanish spoken with a Portuguese accent and some Portuguese words thrown in. Communication was never a major problem.

As I reflect on my six visits, three of them stand out with particular highlights. One was the 1988 MB Global Consultation on Mission, about which I've written in a previous chapter. The passion and hard work of Brazilian MB leaders Jacob August, Alvo Waldow, and Robert Lay made a great contribution to the success of that global event. I feel privileged to have been able to work together with all three as MBM/S partnered with them in mission in Brazil.

The second highlight came in 1995, when I traveled to Curitiba to participate in the celebration of the merger of Brazil's two MB conferences, one the result of MB immigration and the other the result of MBM/S missionary activity. The vision for this merger was something

that Jacob August had shared with me during my first visit there in 1986. He was not present to see it become reality, because he had been killed in an auto accident. But the formation of COBIM reflects his passion for more effective MB witness to the larger Brazilian society.

The third highlight was the visit I made with Helen to Curitiba in 2001. We were gathered for the second Latin American regional consultation on mission sponsored by ICOMB. Helen and I were hosted in the home of Jacob Dueck, an early leader among the German-speaking MB immigrants to Brazil. Once again our Brazilian churches, now united in a single conference, did a wonderful job of organizing and hosting an event focused on mission outreach in Latin America, and from Latin America to the larger world. It was exciting to hear the vision of MB leaders to send missionaries to Africa, Asia, and the Arab world.

The history of MB presence and mission in Brazil, as was true for Paraguay and, to some extent Uruguay, includes at least three streams. The first was the arrival of immigrants from Russia as early as 1930. They formed German speaking MB churches in Santa Catarina state where they settled. Over time, they also began a rather large outreach effort among other German speakers in that state. Then, in 1947, MBM/S began a direct ministry in Brazil by opening a children's home for orphans near Curitiba, staffed by North American missionaries. The story of how these three streams experienced some tensions, some duplication of efforts, and eventually greater cooperation is told in the book by J.J. Toews, *The Mennonite Mission in Latin America.*

During my years as Secretary for Latin America, we initiated three major expansions of mission outreach, in cooperation with the two Brazilian MB conferences. The first was largely an MBM/S initiative targeted at Brazil's largest city, Sao Paulo. We sent a team of missionaries in 1987 with the goal of multiplication from the three or four existing churches that were experiencing some struggles. Two of those churches experienced some renewal and growth, and two or three new churches have been started. However, the initial team experienced some tensions and did not experience the hoped for growth in its initial efforts. Other missionaries have come and gone, some new works have been started, but major multiplication of MB churches in Sao Paulo remains an unreached goal.

A second initiative was undertaken to multiply churches in Santa

Catarina state by sending North American missionaries to work with the MB Association already working there. A number of new churches were planted in smaller towns. Perhaps the most successful cooperative effort in new outreach was in the larger coastal city of Florianopolis, further south in Rio Grande do Sul state. This again was a vision that Jacob August had shared with me during my first visit to Brazil. MBM/S sent Craig Jost, who joined with an Association church planter to launch this effort. At last report, the church there has grown substantially and is planting a daughter church.

A third initiative was made in response to the outreach vision of the Brazilian MB Convention. It was a vision shared with me by Alvo Waldow on our 1986 visit to Brazil's western frontier states. The first stage was already underway through the work of missionaries Don and Marie Faul in Mundo Novo. Then we sent missionaries to the capital city of the adjacent state to the north, Campo Grande. A stable and growing church has been planted there. And finally, we sent missionaries to the city of Cuiaba, still further north. However, that effort lacked Brazilian support and the effort was closed after one term.

Another major cooperative effort between MBM/S and the Brazilian conferences has been in the training of workers for the churches and for their outreach efforts. In the early years, two Bible schools were operated in Curitiba, one in German and one in Portuguese. Later these were combined, and two MBM/S missionaries served long term as professors at the school, called ISBIM. After the merger of the conferences in 2001, steps were taken to merge this program with those of at least two other denominations and a new Evangelical University has been created in Curitiba. These schools have provided workers for many of the MB churches in Brazil. However, the Sao Paulo churches have been hesitant to send their young leaders there because they tended not to return. In 2005, MBMSI missionary Victor Wiens led an initiative to launch a new Bible college training program in Sao Paulo. It is associated with the school in Curitiba and hopefully will provide more workers for the existing churches in Sao Paulo and will contribute to their multiplication. And because Sao Paulo is a very multicultural city, there is also vision for it to develop a missiology track and thus become a training base for Brazilians entering global mission.

Colombia

As mentioned in the Introduction, I first arrived in Cali, Colombia in August 1966 as part of a team of Christian Service teachers, working in the two English medium schools where our MK's attended. With the merger of the two boards that year, we became a part of a large North American team of more than 60 adults and children who were in Colombia under the Board of Missions and Services. As a measure of the priority being given to Colombia as an important field of mission, the budget for missionaries and national church projects in 1967 was set at US $123,000, the largest in Latin America. The mission budget for the large India field was only $101,000 that year, while the largest field, Congo, had a budget of over US $208,000. The budget for the Christian Service team was above the regular mission budget, and mostly covered by what the teachers were paid by the two schools.

By 1966, most of the MBM/S team was located in the central Colombian city of Cali, representing a significant shift to urban ministry that had begun earlier that decade. The first MB work had been in the northwestern department known as the Choco, beginning in 1945. That had mostly been among indigenous tribal groups and with the descendants of earlier African slaves. Details of that early work are given in the book by J.J. Toews, *The Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America.* By 1966, no missionaries were living in the Choco, though regular ministry visits were made by missionaries living in Cali.

The transition from rural to urban work had included an intermediate stage in the rural town of La Cumbre, located in the coastal mountains about an hour's drive west of Cali. It had begun as a mountain retreat center for the missionaries who labored in the intense jungle heat and humidity of the Choco. For a while, a missionary children's school had also operated there, and by 1966, missionary teacher Lillian Schaefer was director of the Mennonite Brethren high school, "Colegio Los Andes" operating there. Shortly after, that school was also moved to Cali, and thus transition to urban ministry by the MBM/S missionary team was complete. However, there was still an MB church in La Cumbre and the missionary compound was transformed into a camp/retreat facility for the national MB conference.

The focus of ministry in Cali was on evangelism and church planting, but missionary assignments included nursing, elementary and high

school education, media ministry, and theological training. With the national church convention having been formed already in 1953, the presence of such a large team of North American workers was at times a source of considerable tension. In 1968, Alvin and Vera Voth were reassigned to begin a new work in the city of Medellin. In 1974, Ebner and Martha Friesen went to Bogotá to begin a new work in the capital city. Most of the rest of the large team in Cali had returned to North America by the early 1980s. Some of the tension between the national church and BOMAS related to the payment of pension for Colombian pastors who had received support from MBM/S and thus were considered to be employees of the mission. In 1981, a settlement was reached between MBM/S and the Colombia conference in which a major payment of North American funds was used to bring pension benefits up to date.

The new church plants in Medellin and Bogotá had mixed results. In Medellin, a building project was left incomplete and when the missionaries left in the early 1980s, the work began to decline. The church in Bogotá had fared somewhat better, with its own facility and a vision to train young leaders. When I returned to Colombia as Latin America Secretary in 1986, I presented a proposal from BOMAS to provide new urban missionary church planting teams in the three cities of Bogotá, Cali, and Medellin. However, the Colombian leadership was focused on the problems in the existing churches and was not ready to move forward with new projects. More extensive negotiations in 1987 resulted in agreement to send new missionaries not only to these three cities but also to seek workers for an urban church plant in the capital city of the Choco department, Quibdo. The latter was filled by a Colombian church planter with support from MBM/S.

By 1989, teams of three North American missionary couples were present in both Medellin and Bogotá to focus on a multiplying church movement. Cali had two couples and one single missionary who were still focused on education and youth ministries. The team in Medellin was able to stimulate the growth of the existing MB church, and a project was undertaken to complete the building. However, the increased threat of violence from the drug wars and the guerrilla movements made life in Medellin extremely difficult for these families. Thus in 1991 two families, the Wiests and the Sieberts, were transferred to Bogotá, while

Albert and Anna Enns from Paraguay went to Cali where they completed their term by leading an evangelistic thrust.

The addition of more missionary resources to the Bogotá church planting effort brought significant results. With major financial assistance from a Canadian donor and assistance from a missionary couple, Herb and Linda Wiebe, the original church there was able to purchase and remodel a new church facility for up to 400 people. A new church plant among upper middle class professionals, which had been started by missionary couples Scott and Julie Rink and Fred and Esther Leonard, continued a growth pattern with the arrival of the Wiests and Sieberts. By 1995, it had installed Miguel Forero, a Colombian with overseas experience as its pastor. Both churches had a vision for outreach and multiplication. By 2004, Bogotá had six MB churches planted and organized, with other extension points and a vision to continue to multiply.

A significant factor in the success of the multiplying church planting movement in Bogotá was the presence of a strong missionary team with a variety of gifts. However, perhaps even more important was the vision to multiply young leaders. Diego Martinez, pastor of the original MB church there had been mentored as a young man by missionaries Bob and Erika Sukkau. He caught the vision and began to disciple other young men in his church. Many of the present pastors in Bogotá and at least two missionaries were a product of that effort.

The story of MB missions in Colombia that began with the arrival of Canadian missionaries in the Choco in 1945 has come full circle. That original effort had its origins in a student movement at the Hepburn Bible School in Saskatchewan. In 2002, Trevor and Joan Goddard, our last North American missionaries to Colombia, completed their final term in Bogotá. They returned to Canada to teach missions at what is now known as the Bethany Bible College in Hepburn. But, as mentioned in an earlier chapter, there is still a vision for MB mission in Colombia. It has become a sending base, with three Colombian couples now participating on MBMSI missionary teams in Peru, Panama, and Mexico.

Mexico

Old Colony Mennonites from Canada migrated to Mexico in the 1920s to escape certain aspects of Canadian culture. In 1950, MB Missions responded by purchasing land for a farm and clinic in the state

of Durango at Nuevo Ideal. However, during twenty years of work in Nuevo Ideal with the Old Colony Mennonites there was much resistance and no organized church was planted.

In 1960, a decision was made to focus the work in Mexico on church planting among Mexicans in a number of cities. Work was started in Durango City in 1961 and in Monterrey in 1965, but no permanent results were achieved. In 1968, two missionary couples were located in the major city of Guadalajara in Jalisco state. By the time I came to the office in 1985, two churches had been planted there and during the ten years that followed two more were planted in that city. However, by 2000, three of them had declined to small groups or had disappeared completely.

During the 1990s several other efforts were made by MBM/S with the Mexican believers to plant MB churches in other cities. A Mexican pastor couple from Guadalajara moved to the city of Leon and was able to plant a small church. For a time, an MBM/S Mission Associate and a variety of short term teams assisted in this effort. However, when the pastor left to take a church in Oregon, the church in Leon became unstable and eventually was closed. Another Mexican MB couple from Guadalajara moved to the city of Queretaro for work reasons. They began a Bible study which had the potential to form a church. MBM/S sent a veteran church planter couple with experience in Colombia to follow up the work when the original Mexican couple left to return to Guadalajara. The work grew but later, when another pastor from Guadalajara took over the work, it began to decline and no permanent church was established.

In chapter six I have described the successful effort to multiply churches in the capital of Mexico City, which was carried out over a ten year period (1989-1999). However, since these churches were the result of a cooperative Anabaptist project, they did not directly identify with the MB conference based in Guadalajara. Over several decades, other churches emerged along the border of Mexico with Texas and with California. Although they carried the name of the MB Conference, "The Christian Church of Peace of Mexico," they found it difficult to relate over the long distances involved. Three small churches on the Texas border were the result of outreach from the US churches there. Three small churches in Baja California, including a fairly large one with major facilities in Tijuana, emerged mostly as the result of short terms teams that

worked in the area. MBMSI sent a veteran missionary couple with experience in Spain, Ron and Fran Penner, to work with the Baja churches and seek to stabilize them. However, family quarrels within the groups and other factors led to the disintegration of the MB churches in Baja by the year 2000.

The net result is that over a period of more than 50 years, more than a dozen local groups of MB believers were established by MB mission efforts. However, few of them ever became fully indigenous with Mexican leadership supported locally. Even those that did become established for a time have declined so that today perhaps only two or three could be considered as organized MB churches. In 2001-2002, a joint review of the MB work in Mexico was carried out by representatives of ICOMB and MBMSI. To support the vision for a stronger MB conference of churches in Mexico, MBMSI sent a team of missionaries to Guadalajara in 2003 with a focus of helping to replant a middle class church there and a strong effort to train leaders. In 2005, they were joined by Trevor and Joan Godard, veteran missionaries from Canada with experience in Colombia. Their intention is to form a mission training center in Guadalajara for both Mexican youth and young adults from other Latin countries. It remains to be seen if these new initiatives will be able to help form a stable and growing Mexican MB conference, something that has eluded our mission efforts of the past half century in Mexico.

Panama

The work of MB missions in Panama is an extension and outgrowth of our early work among the Choco Indians in Colombia. For the Embera and the Wounaan people groups, the political border between these countries was not a barrier to their movement along the coast and on the rivers. Since the MB witness to the Choco group in Colombia had been shut down there by government edict, former MB missionaries to Colombia, Jacob Loewen and David Wirsche, began an outreach to them along the Jaque River in Panama as early as 1959. The story of their early work and its unique "non-resident missionary" approach to mission is related in several chapters of the book by Jacob Loewen, *Culture and Human Values.* It is also summarized in the book by J.J. Toews, *Mennonite Brethren Mission in Latin America* (pp. 145-154).

My first visit to Panama was a brief refueling stop we made at the

Panama City airport on our way to our Christian Service assignment in Cali in 1966. We left the plane to get some fresh air, but found only heat and high humidity. Both Helen and I were convinced at the time that this would be one place we would never choose to live. My first exposure to the MB mission work was during a brief visit to MBM/S missionary Jim Harrison in Panama City in 1967. I had stopped there during a trip back to the US for my brother's wedding while he was living in Colombia. Jim was working with a group of adult literacy teachers from the Embera who were preparing to work with the mission effort in the villages.

Then, as mentioned in the introduction, we were approached by Panama missionary John Goertz in 1977, while we were at language school in Costa Rica, preparing for service in Colombia. We were invited to consider a role in Panama as director for a major development project among the Embera and Wounaan villages where the MB mission had helped to plant churches. I visited the area with John Goertz later that year and was convinced that God was calling us to that ministry. And because we spent nearly eight years living in Panama as leaders of the MBM/S team there, my knowledge of the MB mission effort there is perhaps greater than that of the work in any other country.

Upon our arrival in Panama City in April 1978, we were left to our own devices to settle our family and begin the ministry. The Goertzes had relocated to Canada and missionary nurse Herta Voth was on a village visit in the Darien province. We found lodging with our three children in a residence hotel and began to search for a house to rent in Panama City. In keeping with the earlier "non-resident missionary" approach, we only made periodic visits to the villages where the Embera and Wounaan lived and where their churches were located.

With the help of another American family working with USAID, who had been friends with the Goertzes, we got our family settled and, when Herta returned to the city, we were given a basic orientation to the work ahead. We met the one Wounaan family then living in the city, in a house that the mission had purchased in the suburb of Juan Diaz. This was projected as the site for a future student center. The development project, already approved by both MBM/S and funded by the Canadian government, would provide for the construction of the student center, for both vocational and high school scholarship students from the Wounaan and Embera young people, and for village health and agriculture exten-

sion programs. My job was to implement the vision of the approved project, working in partnership with leadership of the established United Evangelical Church (IEU).

During one of my first trips to the villages after our arrival, I participated in the annual convention of the IEU. People from ten or more village churches gathered each year in one village to celebrate their unity in the family of God and to discuss common needs and concerns. These annual events became the primary forum in which we would involve the grass roots in the ongoing phases of the development project. At this first occasion, two young men were chosen to work closely with me in coordinating the project.

Jorge Pedroza, an Embera, became a close friend. We often traveled on the rivers of the Darien together for long hours in a dugout canoe. In addition to mentoring Jorge in financial management and project coordination, Helen and I became marriage counselors to him and his third wife, Georgina, as they often struggled to build a Christian home and family. Dorindo Membora, a Wounaan, was chosen by the convention as my other partner in project leadership. Though not as outgoing as Jorge, he also became a friend and was the first administrator of our student center in Juan Diaz.

Education was a major component of the MB mission effort in Panama from the beginning, so our next phase of the development project was in that arena. We asked the ten village churches each to select one young man that they would send to Panama City for training in construction at a government vocational school. By late 1978, the ten were living in the old house on the property in Juan Diaz and attending classes. Meanwhile, I had engaged a Panamanian contractor, who also taught at the vocational school, to oversee the construction of the new student center. The ten students provided the majority of the labor for the construction. With the concrete block construction skills they learned in the classroom during that year, they completed the three apartments of the first phase. A year later, they built seven more apartments on the Juan Diaz property, thus completing the original plans for the student center. Many students from the Darien villages lived in these apartments while completing high school, Bible school, and even university over the next 20 years.

However, their learning of both construction theory and practice was

put to the test in many other projects over the next two decades. Since junior high education was available in a Darien trading town called Yaviza, the churches asked us during one annual convention to help them build another student center there. Funding was secured through another phase of the project and appropriate land was identified near the Yaviza school. After much prayer and searching, we located the owner, living in Panama City, and the property was purchased. But for this phase of construction my Embera colleague, Jorge Pedroza, served as our de-facto contractor. He continued to serve in that role during several phases of construction at Yaviza, not only of the student center but also of a vocational training shop and a TB Clinic. An additional building at the center in Juan Diaz was also built in a later phase to accommodate office space, guest rooms, and a large assembly room. Others among those who had received the original training in construction became on-site contractors for a variety of building projects in the villages, including a number of health centers sponsored by USAID.

Perhaps the most satisfying of the educational scholarships that were a part of our development project activity were those to train Wounaan and Embera elementary school teachers for their villages. The original adult literacy work of our pioneer missionaries in Panama led to a request to the Panama government for village schools for their children. By the time of our arrival, such schools were established in most villages, but the results were quite poor. Panamanian "Latino" teachers were sent to these remote locations with little or no knowledge of Indian culture or language. They were often plagued by loneliness and illness and spent much of the school year away from the classroom. Thus the children had great difficulty even learning to read and were poorly prepared to enter junior high school in Yaviza.

Using scholarships from the project funding, young men and women from the Embera and Wounaan villages were selected by the IEU convention each year to receive their normal school preparation for teaching. Most returned to the villages of the Darien as teachers, although some were also drawn into business, politics, and other leadership roles. Elementary education in the villages was greatly enhanced by this effort.

During the initial years of the development project, John Goertz continued to come to Panama several times each year to conduct seminars for church leaders. This helped to provide good balance in our

ministries. When his visits ended, however, I felt that the social ministry aspects of the high profile development project were in danger of drowning the spiritual passion and evangelistic vision of the village churches. So I requested and was granted liberty to spend a portion of my time mentoring pastors and providing regular seminars for village church workers. This required special consideration since my support came through the CIDA funded project.

My work with pastors and emerging young leaders became a very rewarding part of my ministry in the ensuing years. From the first year, I had built a relationship with Agustin Membora, a committed Wounaan pastor who became the first to enter formal theological training at the Baptist Seminary near Panama City. Narciso Pacheco, from the Embera branch of the church, then joined him at seminary and both graduated there. Later both became active in what we called the "United Campaigns" in the villages of the Darien. These included an evangelistic component, which Agustin and Narciso led, a TB control and health component, led by one of the trained village health workers, and an agricultural component. These campaigns resulted in the planting of several new village churches.

The training of new and existing church workers for the IEU continued along several streams. At least once per year I provided a week-long seminar on biblical interpretation, preaching, or another topic, held at either the Juan Diaz or Yaviza center. Several more younger leaders attended the Baptist Seminary. Then, as described in an earlier section, the Anabaptist extension training program from Guatemala, known as SEMILLA, became a vital part of preparing new church leaders. All of these training opportunities were being conducted in the Spanish language. Shortly before we left Panama in 1985, a vision emerged to begin village Bible schools at a more basic level using the two indigenous languages, Woun Meu and Embera Pedea. I helped Agustin and Narciso to develop the curriculum for these two schools, which they then directed and taught for a number of years after our departure. These schools provided training at a more grassroots level that in some ways was more consistent with the early methods used by the pioneer MB missionaries in Panama.

With regard to the public health aspect of the development project, for the years during our service in Panama, Canadian nurse Herta Voth

played a very important role. Herta acknowledged God as the healer and viewed medicine as merely one of the tools he could use in the process. She always prayed before administering an injection. I personally experienced her care on a number of occasions when I became quite ill during a village ministry visit. Several young men were selected to be trained in government programs as health program coordinators.

In addition to general health concerns, a primary goal of the program was to control the incidence and spread of tuberculosis which was widely present in the Embera and Wounaan villages. In the early stages, Herta and the other health workers traveled to the villages to identify and treat individuals with TB. However, since the treatment involves long-term medications and this approach offered minimal follow up, it was not widely successful. This led to the building of the TB clinic at the Yaviza church center some years after my departure. A group of Indian style houses were also built next to it. TB patients were brought to Yaviza and monitored at the center during the first month or two of their treatment. This led to a much greater cure rate and also provided more opportunity for spiritual ministry to the patients during their stay at the center. Other MBM/S missionary nurses joined Herta and later continued this aspect of the ministry after her departure.

The agricultural component of the project met with some limited success but did not fundamentally change the subsistence agricultural practices of the villagers. At the beginning, our focus was on improvement of the marketing potential for their production of plantain, a type of "cooking banana." Lack of adequate communication with the villages was a major factor causing the loss of much of what they produced before it could get to market in the city. I was able to introduce some communication technology that made a difference. With project funding, we purchased ten two-way radios, auto-type batteries, and solar panels to charge the batteries. Eight of them were installed in villages and one in each of the two student centers. With this new means of communication, both the marketing of their produce and communication for other urgent needs were greatly improved.

MBM/S workers Angus and Lavern Pratt joined our team to give leadership to an effort to introduce some new farming methods in the villages. Several small demonstration farms were created where new seeds, planting techniques, and animal raising methods were tried. While these

farms had some success in increasing production and even creating extra income, few of the methods tried became a regular part of the practice of village farmers. A related project which Angus introduced was that of drilling village water wells with hand operated pumps. This provided a clean water alternative to the increasingly polluted water of the river near the villages.

Two other aspects of our work were particularly rewarding. Helen had begun to play guitar during our two years in Colombia and brought her guitar to Panama. Soon a number of the vocational students asked if she could teach them to play. We purchased several inexpensive guitars and she began a class at the Juan Diaz center. By the end of the first class they had learned the two basic chords needed to play the familiar Spanish chorus titled "Alabare." Since the Embera and Wounaan learned best by doing, they practiced intensely and within a year many were playing well. Before we left Panama, the use of guitars in village worship had spread widely in the Darien churches. In my last visit to Panama in January 2003, I met a young Wounaan man who was completing a university level program in music. He not only played the guitar well but also composed indigenous worship music.

The other new ministry that Helen and I initiated together during our last two years in Panama was that of a youth group in Juan Diaz. In traditional village culture, the stage of single adolescence was really non-existent. Youth became adults shortly after puberty, as they joined with a spouse and began to raise and support a family. Most of our first group of vocational students, though as young as 16 or 17 had families. Six years later, we had students in Juan Diaz who were that age or older and still single. The youth group became a means to teach them biblical and practical approaches to living in the new reality of being single teenagers.

A number of individual youth became especially close to our family, and several even became a part of it. One young Embera man, Rigoberto Degaiza, became interested in studies in North America during the visit of a Tabor College short-term mission team to a Darien village at the time of the annual convention. Through connections with the MCC Visitor Exchange Program, Rigo was accepted to spend one year in the US. He spent several months in our home prior to leaving to improve his English and to begin adapting to American culture. He joined our other

three children as an older brother. Upon his return to Panama, he again lived with our family for a time. Then Rigo was accepted as a student at Fresno Pacific College where he completed a degree in business administration. Upon his return to Panama, he became the director of the IEU development project for several years. Since then he has worked with both international and Panamanian government agencies.

A young Wounaan man, Diego Peña, lived as a part of our family in Panama City for two years. His father, Chindio, decided to take the family back to the Choco jungle of Colombia after raising their children in Panama City to work with the Wycliffe translator. Diego was halfway through high school and did not want to leave. We invited him to live with us while completing his high school studies. It was both a challenge and a delight as we worked at merging three cultures and languages. After returning to the US in 1985, we had further contact with three other MCC trainees who came to Kansas for their assignment. One of them stayed in our home in Hillsboro. Welcoming these Wounaan and Embera youth to our family was a great cross-cultural learning experience for our other three children. The three who lived in our home in Panama still call us "mom and dad" and email contact continues.

About the time of our departure from Panama in 1985, we had begun discussions with the IEU about launching a church planting effort in Panama City that would also include people from the majority Panamanian culture. But it was not until 1990 that the effort was begun, with leadership by a couple from Honduras, Jose and Suyapa Perez, who were living in Panama City at the time. Their efforts led to the formation of a small group of believers known as the Community of Faith which met in their home. Several factors, including the invasion of Panama by the American military, affected the growth of this new church plant. In 1992, a Canadian couple was added to the team, but emotional issues resulted in their early departure before the end of their first year. By the time of a major evaluation of the work by an outside evaluator in mid-1994, it was clear that this effort was not viable and a decision was made to close the work. Some years later, a number of small congregations of the IEU emerged in the eastern suburbs of Panama City, but they are serving the Wounaan and Embera. Many had moved near the city as they fled the increase of violence in the Darien that followed the US invasion.

For some eight years after the departure of the Perez family, the

church in Panama was again without the presence of a resident MBMSI missionary, even in Panama City. A number of brief ministry visits were made by the MBMSI Latin Director, by a missionary couple working with Wycliffe Translators, and by missionaries from Colombia and Guatemala. But a request continued to come to the MBMSI office from the IEU to have a resident missionary presence again. There was special concern for someone to work in developing church leaders among the younger generation of Wounaan and Embera, but several attempts to recruit such workers in North America failed. During my last visit to Panama in January 2003, we discussed the possibility of inviting a young pastoral couple from Colombia to come to Panama as MBMSI missionaries. This proposal was accepted by the IEU leadership. Einer and Girleza Zuluaga arrived in Juan Diaz later that year and are still serving in a discipleship and leadership training ministry with the IEU.

Paraguay

The history of MB mission in Paraguay is closely tied to the history of Mennonite immigration to Paraguay from Russia. The first Mennonite Brethren arrived in the Fernheim colony of the Chaco in 1930. By 1935 they had joined other Mennonites to form a mission society called "Light to the Indians" that would work among the Lengua Indians of the area. In 1946, responding to a request for help, the churches in North America sent two couples to Paraguay to help with the mission work among the Indians of the Chaco.

While MBM/S has thus been involved in the mission outreach to the Indians since 1946, work among the Spanish speaking population in Asuncion and the surrounding area only began about ten years later. With roots in the German speaking immigrant MB churches of Paraguay, Albert and Anna Enns led the Thrust Evangelism effort over a period of more than three decades. Their story is told in detail in the book by Dorothy Siebert, *Whatever It Takes*. Later two more couples, Rudolph and Hilde Plett and Hans and Irene Pankratz, were also appointed by MBM/S to assist in the evangelism efforts and the training of leaders for the emerging Spanish speaking churches. A variety of other members from the German speaking MB churches in Paraguay and a number of other missionaries, both short-term and long-term, from North America have assisted in the formation of what became the Paraguayan Convention of MB Churches.

I met with the leadership of the growing Spanish-speaking Paraguayan MB Convention during my first visit to Paraguay in 1986. During an extended drive to visit a church outside of Asuncion, they shared with me their desire for a more direct partnership relationship with MBM/S in negotiating mission assistance for their conference. They indicated that this was the first time they had been able to speak directly with an MBM/S home office representative in Spanish, without using one of the local German MB workers as a translator. They expressed appreciation for what the German speaking MBs had done in the evangelism campaigns that created the conference of Spanish speaking churches. But now they felt it was time to take responsibility as "Latinos" for their own strategy, vision, and partnerships. Further insightful analysis of partnership and communication issues in Paraguay is found in Hartwig Eitzen's work entitled, *Dependent, Independent, Interdependent? A Case Study In Mission Partnership Between North And South America.* Hartwig came to MBBS in Fresno for MA studies, during which time he and his family were active participants with us in the Spanish ministry at Butler Church. He then completed his doctorate at Trinity Seminary in Illinois and has returned as a professor at the school in Asuncion.

I made four more visits to Paraguay, in 1988, 1989, 1992, and 2004. Each was an opportunity to develop new relationships, learn more about its church and culture, and see some amazing things that God was doing in and through the Mennonite Brethren Church. The 1988 visit was made together with MBM/S Board Chair, Henry H. Dick. Since the German speaking MB conference is centered in the Chaco region, we made the trip from Asuncion to Filadelfia, the main town in the Fernheim colony. On my first and only visit there, three things especially impressed me.

First was the deep and lasting faith of the believers there after some 60 years of struggle to survive. The churches live out their faith with major commitments of time and resources to outreach and discipleship. Second was the way in which their strong work ethic and technology assistance from North America had enabled them to build a prosperous economic system based on agriculture. Our host in Filadelfia took us to see his cattle ranch. As we drove in his new Toyota double-cab pickup, he showed us his large herd and the two prize bulls imported from Texas. Others have large dairy herds. The colonies produce a large percentage of the beef and dairy products consumed in Paraguay.

Another impressive aspect was the cultural isolation that had been maintained for more than half a century. Since Henry Dick spoke Low German, most conversation was in that tongue, with me as a listener. Even at the local supermarket, people conversed in Low German at the checkout stands. And when we went to visit one of the early Lengua Indian church leaders at his house, I thought that at last I would be able to speak with someone in Spanish. But alas, he greeted me in Low German! There were many signs, however, that their isolation was beginning to change. The new paved Chaco highway meant more access for their youth to the city and more visitors from the outside. New phone connections, cable TV, and even the internet brought the whole outside world to the colonies. Today the churches there are challenged not only to transmit the faith to their families but also to reach out to the wider world from a context that is no longer so isolated.

The German MB conference is partly meeting that challenge through support of a number of institutions. A radio station we visited in Filadelfia, and another built later in East Paraguay are communicating the Gospel. In Asuncion, a recording studio, FM radio station, and counseling center were established, largely helped by funding from Canadian Mennonite Brethren through MBM/S. During my visit in 1992, I witnessed the start of a large K-12 educational complex in Asuncion, built with funds from Germany but operated by the German-speaking MB Conference and reaching mainly into the lowest income families of the capital.

Following my first visit to Paraguay in 1986, MBM/S agreed to partner with the MB Conference in a new church planting effort in East Paraguay. This outreach targeted the German-speaking immigrants from Brazil who were settling in the area to clear and cultivate new farmland. A couple from Canada with previous experience in Brazil was appointed as MBM/S missionaries for this project. I visited their home in Naranjal during a consultation trip in 1989. The area had primitive roads and conditions were difficult, but a small group of believers was formed. However, a variety of issues, including some tension with Conference leadership, led to the end of this partnership after their second term.

During my last visit to Paraguay in June 2004, I was impressed by several more ways in which the German-speaking MB churches are reaching out to the larger Paraguayan culture. The one church of that

conference in Asuncion is at the center of these efforts, but they are backed by the broader conference as well. One is the founding of the Evangelical University of Paraguay. The MB Conference is one of the partners and is particularly involved in the schools of theology and education. Another is a commercial television station that was established by the MB Conference shortly before my visit. It is being operated as a "family channel" with wholesome news and variety programming, along with some more gospel-focused programming. Church members made large initial investments in upgrading its facilities, but their hope is to make it self-supporting through advertising over the long run.

The last initiative, and perhaps the one with the greatest impact to date, is the founding of a Spanish-speaking congregation in Asuncion, using the facilities of the German-speaking church. Known as "Raices" (roots), the congregation is composed of many professional and business-related Paraguayans who have been evangelized and discipled largely through home Bible studies. After several years of outreach, this congregation is now led by Victor Wall and Ezekiel Villar, both graduates of our MB Biblical Seminary in Fresno where they studied with the help of leadership scholarships from MBM/S. During our 2004 visit, we had dinner with the wife of Paraguay's president, who is also now a member of Raices. This church is making an impact at the highest levels of Paraguayan society.

Another highlight of the 2004 visit was a celebration of the 50th anniversary of the work that formed the Spanish-speaking MB convention in Paraguay. Special tribute was given to missionary Albert Enns, considered by many as its founding father. He shared his testimony of the opposition and even persecution he and others experienced in the early days of their evangelistic team efforts. Many of the other leaders with whom I had the privilege of building a relationship over 18 years of visits to Paraguay were also present at the celebration. Today the convention has some 30 churches and continues to reach out in Paraguay and beyond. I was told of a group of MB believers from Paraguay who had recently moved to Spain and was forming a church there. We rejoiced together in what God has done through mission.

Peru

I first visited Peru as a tourist in late 1967 during a brief vacation from my MK teaching duties in Colombia. During a stop in Lima, I was able to attend a service at one of the large Alliance churches there and heard the story of their considerable success in urban church planting. I did not even imagine that some 35 years later I would have a role in launching an MB church plant in that capital city.

As indicated earlier, the merger of the MB and KMB conferences in 1960 meant that the MB mission board took responsibilities for the KMB missionaries. Many KMB missionaries worked under the umbrella of other agencies and, in Peru, the focus was on a ministry in the Eastern jungles among the Campa Ashaninca indigenous people group. One of those couples came from my home church in Dinuba. I made my first visit to this work in 1986 as a part of that introductory trip with Victor Adrian.

We flew by commercial plane into the city of Pucallpa, about an hour's flight over the Andes from Lima. There we were hosted by Paul and Maurene Friesen, who lived on the nearby compound of the Swiss Indian Mission. We also visited some MB workers at the Wycliffe sponsored translation center at Yarinacocha, near Pucallpa. Some of our previous KMB missionaries had lived at the center, and most all the MK's had attended school there.

We then made a visit to the small town of Mazamari, where our development work with the Ashaninca was centered. Joe and Jan Walter, (who lived in the nearby town of Satipo), along with nurse Helen Braun, were present for a seminar, using the facilities of the South American Mission with whom we also partnered in the work among the Ashaninca. For me, it was interesting to see how similar the life and culture of the Ashaninca was to that of the Embera and Wounaan with whom we had worked in Panama.

The Friesens had been actively engaged with the Ashaninca since about 1960, and Paul was able to speak, read, and write the Ashaninca language. Thus he gave leadership to annual pastors' training seminars held in Mazamari. At the Swiss Mission center, he taught classes in the Indian Bible Institute, which a number of Ashaninca pastors were able to attend. Paul also had a heart for music and was able to prepare some Ashaninca songbooks. Paul and Maureen continued to serve in ministry

to the Ashaninca even after retirement. He was working on an Old Testament translation project at the time of his death in a auto accident in late 2005.

In an approach similar to what I had directed in Panama, MBM/S sponsored a long-term village development project among the Ashaninca. With oversight by missionary Joe Walter, the project received major funding from the Canadian government and provided a variety of services in education, health, and agriculture. Following the departure of the Walters, Wald and Joy Pauls came to direct the project, based in Mazamari. A second nurse, Hazel Biehn, also joined the development team. Two houses were purchased in Mazamari by MBM/S for missionary use, and development funding was provided to build a student center there for use by the Ashaninca church. I made another visit to Mazamari in 1989, together with Helen, to encourage our workers there and to help develop a stronger partnership with the Ashaninca church conference. We also negotiated a more formal partnership agreement with the South America Mission.

The Ashaninca Development Project continued through seven phases until 1993 and much was done to help their villages to improve their living conditions and the education of their children. However, by 1990 the work was being seriously hampered by the terrorist activity of the communist "Shining Path" group. Members of the guerillas often entered Ashaninca villages to rob and pillage. In several instances they sought out anyone in leadership or with education for savage beating and even execution. A number of village church leaders and teachers were killed in full view of other villagers. Several villages were completely abandoned as the inhabitants fled into the jungles.

On one occasion, the two MBM/S missionary nurses living in Mazamari received a printed death threat in a note thrown over their gate. They were evacuated in the face of this direct threat and to avoid further persecution of any Ashaninca health workers seen to be working with them. The Pauls also did not return to Mazamari for their second term, but rather went to join the MBM/S team in Northern Peru. By 1995, security conditions in the region had improved, but MBM/S had no personnel available to work with Ashaninca development. Thus a transfer of responsibility to MCC was negotiated. They were able to place personnel in Satipo, village development projects continued for a number of years.

A mission effort to plant MB churches in the towns and cities of northern Peru was launched in 1984, following a relief effort in which MBM/S had responded to the widespread destruction caused in the Piura region by the floods of El Niño in 1983. Bibles were included in the containers of wheat sent from Canada. This led to a request for group Bible studies. John and Agnes Penner, church elders from British Columbia, were sent to the town of Sullana to begin the formal church planting effort.

When we visited the Penners in January 1986 as part of my orientation trip, a small congregation was meeting in their home. There was enthusiasm for further outreach, and by the time of my next visit to Peru, groups were also meeting in three smaller towns. The team of church planters began to expand and a strategy was developed for planting a cluster of MB churches in the North over a 15-year period. This included an effort, launched in 1989, to plant a church in a middle class sector of the provincial capital city of Piura. It was further anticipated that when that was done, church planting could also proceed in the cities of Chiclayo and Trujillo, down the coast, and eventually in the country's capital city of Lima.

Because the work in northern Peru had begun as a flood relief effort, social ministries were a vital part from the beginning. Several agricultural projects were envisioned and at least some of them were carried out. However, plans for building irrigation canals were never implemented as funding was not obtained. Construction of church buildings was another significant factor in promoting the growth of the work in the north. Cabinet-maker Peter Loewen from British Columbia spent a year in northern Peru, working with local teams to design, finance, and build at least five church facilities.

Another significant factor in the stable growth of the MB churches in northern Peru has been the training of church workers. From early on, Jeff Prather and Gerald Falk led an effort to provide theological education by extension (TEE) using the FLET program widely used in Latin America. This was hands-on training with much opportunity for putting their learning into practice in their local church and in the outreach efforts to other locations. Later this was supplemented by MBMSI scholarships for students who had completed the FLET courses to continue study at the Asuncion Bible Institute in Paraguay. Several have now

graduated from that program, including pastors of churches.

During my visit in 1995, the initial projection to expand church planting efforts toward the South, after a cluster of churches was established in the North, became the subject of much discussion. A Peruvian couple known to our missionaries in Piura was available to start a work in the coastal city of Trujillo. Some North American funding was approved and a ministry to middle class professionals was begun. I visited Trujillo with our new Latin America Director, Miguel Forero, in 1997. We left with some deep concerns about the approach being taken as it did not seem to focus on the formation of an organized local church.

An experienced Canadian missionary church planter couple, Robert and Erika Sukkau, was sent to Trujillo in 1998 to provide additional help for the church planting effort. This resulted in tensions regarding strategy and led to the eventual suspension of the Peruvian couple by the Peru MB conference. A wrongful termination lawsuit was launched against the conference, leading to further tensions. The claim against the conference was denied by the courts. Meanwhile, the body of believers grew and a church building was started. At last report, there are plans for this church to begin an outreach effort to plant a church in a nearby mountain town.

In 1999, a couple from the MB conference in Colombia, Jose and Esperanza Prada, joined the church planting team in Piura. They had significant church planting experience and were able to build on the earlier contacts of the team there. They focused on discipling the new believers and held the first baptism by the end of that year. By the end of their first term, the congregation was stable and a recent Peruvian graduate from IBA in Asuncion was installed as their pastor.

Following furlough, the Pradas returned to Peru but located in the capital city of Lima. Thus the final stage of our initial church planting projections for the Peru MB conference was implemented. In August 2004, I was able to visit Peru again to participate in the 20th anniversary of the work, held in Piura. Those present included John and Agnes Penner, our pioneer church planters there, whom I had met on my first visit. More than 400 believers from the ten or more MB churches gathered to celebrate God's faithfulness. The occasion was also a farewell for Gerald and Shirley Falk, our longest serving missionaries in the North. The Conference was now in the hands of Peruvian leadership.

Following the celebrations, I spent the last two days of my visit in Lima with the Pradas. We rejoiced together in what God was doing there, as a new congregation of believers is also forming in the capital. By God's grace it too will grow and multiply in the capital and beyond. Both the Pradas and the leadership in the North shared a vision to continue church planting in Lima and even further to the south until they reached the border with Chile.

Uruguay

Uruguay is the most distant of the Latin American countries in which MBMSI has engaged in church planting. From my perspective, it has also been the most difficult. MBs first arrived as immigrants in Uruguay in 1948, mostly from Poland. And as they had done earlier in Brazil and Paraguay, they formed a Mennonite Brethren church with some 18 original members. In the 20 years that followed, ministers from Paraguay and North America came for fraternal ministries and the number of believers increased as churches were organized in three colony locations.

Many young people left the colonies to work in Montevideo, and from 1957 to 1961, John Wall with his wife Frieda served as houseparents for the young people in the city, as well as starting a Bible school and providing ministry to the three churches. John later served as Latin America Secretary in the MBM/S office. The North American Board of General Welfare sent other workers and, by 1963, there was considerable outreach to other German-speaking people in the city. A building was purchased in the Peñarol district to use for church services.

In 1968, Dan and Elsie Wirsche, MBM/S missionaries with experience in Colombia, arrived in Montevideo to take this new mission outreach to the next stage. Because they were fluent in English, German, and Spanish, they were able to reach out to the Spanish-speaking community as well. By the following year, attendance at the Spanish service was more than double that of the German service.

When I first visited Uruguay in 1986, churches had been started in two more areas of Montevideo and our team of missionaries was also teaching in the Bible school to train pastors and other church workers. And while a church still existed in the Gartental colony, the focus of the organized MB Conference was on the work in Montevideo. New church plants were envisioned for another area of the capital, as well as in the

interior city of Paysandu. A five-year projection for partnership in mission was negotiated.

However, when I visited Montevideo again in 1988, it became increasingly clear that our partnership was in trouble. The Conference bylaws in Uruguay called for the election of new leadership every year. Thus it seemed that we had to start over in our discussion of joint programs. This pattern continued during subsequent consultation visits in 1989 and 1992. In addition, graduates of the Bible school seemed unwilling to provide pastoral leadership in the churches unless their salaries were guaranteed for a longer period by North American funding. Thus we learned in our visit in 1992 that none of the ten graduates were serving as pastors.

In spite of these many difficulties and challenges in our partnership, people have come to Christ and churches have continued to minister. However, attempts by several MBM/S missionaries to plant a church among the professional class in Montevideo were not successful. The last such attempt, by Ernie and Ursula Janzen, our last resident missionaries there, made some progress prior to their retirement in 2003. However, the conference of churches continued to struggle, with total membership of less than 200. No plans were in place for MBMSI to send additional missionaries to Uruguay in the near future.

Other Ministries in Latin America with MBMSI Connections

Mission Partnerships

Following the ICOMB conference in Curitiba in 2001, Helen and I were able to visit the Iguazu Falls on the Argentine side. MBMSI had never made a specific plan to begin long-term mission efforts in **Argentina**. However, since Argentina has borders with Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay, there have been a variety of MB contacts in Argentina from those countries. Some pastors and other MB leaders have received MBM/S scholarships for advanced studies in Buenos Aires. Some CPE short-term evangelism teams have been sent by MBMSI for ministry in Argentina with other evangelical churches.

The Mennonite Brethren church was planted in Cordoba, Argentina through a connection with the Spanish-speaking MB Convention of Paraguay. An Argentine believer who became a part of the MB church

while he studied and worked in Asuncion, returned to Cordoba to plant a church there. There has been ongoing contact with the Asuncion churches and, in 1997, MBMSI approved some specific financial support for the church in Cordoba.

In the late 1990s, a couple from California was appointed by MBMSI as Mission Associates to **Belize**. They worked in partnership with the agency called "Target Earth" to promote environmental protection. They established a center for environmental study and preservation, and also offered a variety of social ministries to the local residents. A short term YMI team served with them for a period of ministry to youth in the community.

Costa Rica has seen many MBM/S missionaries in residence, though no formal effort to plant MB churches has been started there. Helen and I arrived in San Jose in 1977 for eight months of formal language study at the Spanish Language Institute. For several decades, many other MBM/S missionaries to Latin America have also studied the Spanish language there prior to service elsewhere.

In 1972, Hugo Zorrilla, a pastor from Cali, Colombia, was supported by the mission board for studies at the Latin American Seminary in San Jose. When we arrived in 1977 for language study, he was living there as a professor at the seminary. In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of other students from Panama and Paraguay studied in Costa Rica with MBM/S scholarship assistance.

With the growth of our short-term programs for both youth and older adults, Costa Rica also became a good ministry location for those teams. There are many evangelical churches in Costa Rica, including those of other Mennonite conferences. Both our YMI and CPE/DMI programs have sent short-term teams to Costa Rica.

I have made two visits to **Ecuador**. The first was a part of a holiday trip from Cali during the Christmas/New Year's break of 1967-68. I was hosted by MBM/S missionaries Peter and Maria Huebert, who showed me the facilities of HCJB radio. A large carved wooden statue of an Ecuadorian peasant farmer that sets in our living room is a reminder of that visit. Mennonite Brethren ministry in Ecuador was tied to the radio broadcasts of HCJB radio in Quito. BOMAS had accepted the responsibility to staff the German department of the station and sent its first workers in 1953. Over the years that followed, there was frequent

discussion about the effectiveness of radio, but by 1970, the commitment was to provide two couples and one single lady missionary for this ministry.

The ministry at first was mostly focused on ministry to German-speakers in Brazil and other South American countries. However, in 1981 the focus was shifted toward listeners in Europe, and the importance of tying listeners to local churches was emphasized. In 1984, a decision was made to phase out MBM/S participation in the German department at HCJB when the missionary personnel then in place retired. Efforts would be made to recruit new personnel from the German and Brazilian conferences.

In 1989, Helen and I visited Quito to encourage our missionaries and to discuss the upcoming transitions. We were hosted by Sally Schroeder, who took us downtown to see some typical shops. In one, we learned that the president of Ecuador had just been detained by the air force during a visit to Guayaquil, and the country was about to declare martial law. Our visit was cut short as we quickly picked up our luggage and headed for the airport. We caught the last flight to leave the country for about a week and landed safely in Bogotá. Our plane was met by many reporters anxious for reports on what was happening in Ecuador. By 1990, MBM/S personnel were no longer active at HCJB, but a decade later MBMSI again had a short term presence in Ecuador through YMI team ministry.

Our participation in a leadership training ministry in **Guatemala** began in 1984 when support for two students from Panama in the SEMILLA training project was approved by MBM/S. The vision for SEMILLA grew out of a discussion within the Latin America group of CIM which focused on the need to provide some advanced training for church leaders in Central America from an Anabaptist perspective. As a missionary in Panama, I helped the local United Evangelical Church and MBM/S to become founding members of this effort.

Rather than focusing on a single campus or in a single country, SEMILLA has operated as a mobile seminary. It has a base office in Guatemala City, but the faculty members come from many places and courses are taught both at the home office and in the other Central American countries where churches participate. The first two participants from Panama were graduates of the local Baptist Bible Institute in Panama.

Many more Wounaan and Embera students have participated in the two decades that followed.

Another major commitment to the SEMILLA project was made by MBM/S in 1992, when Juan and Olga Martinez were approved for missionary service in Guatemala. Juan served as the Rector of SEMILLA until June 2001. Earlier Rectors had come from other mission boards, so this was a way of sharing the costs. However, because of the minimal involvement of MB students at SEMILLA, only 50% of the support for their second term was committed from the general budget of MBM/S. Some support from other CIM agencies and from individual donors made up the remainder.

As had occurred in China and Congo earlier in our history, MB mission in **Venezuela** was begun by local MB churches in North America before it was adopted as a formal ministry of MBM/S. Prior to 1991, the Pacific Grace MB Church of Vancouver had sent one of its associate pastors to encourage a group of Chinese immigrant believers in Caracas and to help them organize a church. Around the same time, a Hispanic church in Parlier, California, sent one of its members, a former pastor in Venezuela, to organize an MB church among believers in the city of Maracaibo.

MBM/S Board member Nick Dyck and I visited Venezuela in January of 1991 to explore the opportunities for our further involvement in mission there. After having worked for a time with an established Chinese church, Miller and Isabella Zhuang had just launched a new church planting effort among recent immigrants. Miller also took us to Puerto LaCruz, further east, where a small group of believers was meeting in a restaurant. With many more Chinese arriving monthly in Venezuela, the potential for this ministry seemed large. The Zhuangs were then appointed as MBM/S missionaries and over the next two terms helped to establish these two churches and turn them over to local leadership. MBM/S assisted financially in the purchase of a building in Caracas. The church in Vancouver continues to send fraternal visitors for encouragement.

Our visit to the Spanish work in Maracaibo included witnessing a baptism that was held in Lake Maracaibo. We were also shown some property which MBM/S later helped to purchase for a church. A short term YMI team, which included our daughter Carmen, went to Maraca-

ibo in 1993 to assist with the building project. However, the leadership for this project was uncertain and a few years later the work was turned over to another denomination.

In 2004, a young man from California was sent by MBMSI as a Mission Associate to Caracas. He went to teach in a Christian international school there. Since he had worked with a Chinese church during his seminary studies, he also related to the local Chinese church.

Short-Term Teams

I have made brief visits to LaPaz in **Bolivia**, but have not had the opportunity to visit the Mennonite colonies or churches in the Santa Cruz area. MBMSI has sent a number of CPE/DMI teams to Bolivia to work with local churches in door–to- door evangelism but no MB church planting has been done. MBMSI has also sent short-term evangelistic teams to **Chile** through its CPE/DMI program

In the mid-1990s, invitations came from churches in **Cuba** for DMI teams from Canada to visit and assist them in door-to-door evangelism. However, the restrictive environment made this approach difficult and only two teams were sent. Several CPE/DMI teams have also worked in partnership with local churches in the **Dominican Republic**, another island nation in the Caribbean. In Central America, **El Salvador, Honduras, and Nicaragua** have received CPE/DMI teams sent by MBMSI for door-to-door evangelism in partnership with local churches.

Chapter Fourteen

NORTH AMERICA

Ministry to native people groups in the United States and Canada was part of the earliest formal cross-cultural mission outreach by Mennonite Brethren on this continent. The outreach to the Comanche Indians in Oklahoma, begun in 1894, even predated the sending of the first North American missionaries to India. But for most of the first half of the 20th century, the Board of Foreign Missions focused its ministries overseas. Then when the Christian Service program was inherited through the board merger of 1966, the Board of Missions and Services again had workers in North America for a transition period. However, in 1977, the Board Executive reviewed the difficulties of administering a domestic program under an overseas board. As a result, a decision was made to transfer that portion of the Christian Service program to the national conferences by 1980.

A decade later, in preparation for the MB General Conference convention of 1990, General Director Victor Adrian proposed a new cross-cultural mission thrust in North America. He proposed that MBM/S be given an expanded mandate that would include two specific foci within Canada and the United States. The first would be an outreach in cooperation with MB District, Provincial, or National Conferences to plant churches among recent immigrant groups. Priority would be given to work with groups from "least-reached" countries or where foreign missionaries were not welcome. The second focus would be to work with local churches and districts or provincial conferences to reach out to international students during their time of studies in North America. This two-pronged expansion of the MBM/S mandate was approved.

While Victor began some negotiations to initiate these new efforts, the responsibility for implementation quickly shifted to my desk when he was sidelined by the accident. It stayed with me for several years after I assumed the role of General Director. Partnerships were created that included the investment of significant financial resources from MBMSI and other agencies in these ministries over the next dozen years. The results were mixed.

In the United States, the Conference was just starting a new church

planting ministry called Mission USA. MBM/S offered to provide funding and counsel in projects to plant churches among recent immigrants. However, Mission USA decided to focus on Anglo church plants, while the immigrant relationships were to be developed by Loyal Funk as Director of Integrated Ministries. Over the next ten years, MBM/S partnered with Loyal in efforts to help develop immigrant churches among Hispanics in Laredo and Omaha; among Slavics in Washington, Oregon, and California; among Koreans in Los Angeles, and in a variety of other projects. Most of these were not pioneer church plants, but rather involved the adoption of groups of immigrant believers, helping them to develop leadership and acquire church properties.

During the same period, MBM/S worked with several provincial church extension committees in Canada who were involved in planting ethnic congregations among immigrants. In BC, there were church plants among Arabs, Slavics, Indo-Canadians, and Hispanics. In Toronto, work was started among Indo-Canadians and others from Asia, and in Montreal, among African immigrants.

The primary effort supported by MBM/S in outreach to students was a program in Fresno called Hospitality to International Students (HISP). With several local churches and the Pacific District as partners, this group sought to connect local MB church members as hosts for international students at local colleges. In effect, the goal was to provide a home away from home for these students and through friendship to introduce them to the gospel. The program had broad participation for a number of years, although I am not aware of any statistics on long-term impact.

After 2000, when funding for MBMSI general programs became tighter, funds were cut back for most of these partnerships and were phased out completely over a period of several years. However, some ministry within North America continues through other channels. Several non-resident missionaries have been appointed by MBMSI in recent years. Living in Canada or the US, they minister to Khmu, Filipino, Slavic, and Arabic people both within North America and overseas.

Section IV

The Future of Mennonite Brethren Mission

Chapter Fifteen

LOOKING AHEAD AT MB MISSION IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

My reflections on the past 40 years of personal connection to MB mission have struck me with the massive changes in a variety of factors that affect how we do mission. These include greatly increased mobility and global awareness through advances in communications and transportation technologies. When our first child was born in the Congo, it took nearly a week before our parents knew they had a new grandchild. Today, with the internet, missionaries can email that news right from the delivery room and then attach pictures of the new child.

My goal in this chapter, however, is take a brief look at what may lie ahead. What are the opportunities and challenges for MB mission in the next four decades?

Mission Structures

The transition to new leadership at MBMS International has brought another shift in the location of the agency's headquarters office. In the initial search process, the Board had indicated that the leadership team would remain in Fresno. When the appointment of the new General Director was announced, this was changed and his office was located in Abbotsford. However, the Board indicated its intention to maintain a significant office in Fresno.

At this writing, only the office of the Regional Mobilizer for the Pacific District and that of a Short-Term Mission Coordinator remain in Fresno, with the headquarters and all Lead Team staff now located in Abbotsford. With the Mobilizer position in Wichita unfilled, and with missionary training also moved from Fresno to Abbotsford, there are new challenges for MBMSI to maintain its connections with the US churches. With the demise of the General Conference structures, that venue no longer exists for keeping the vision for MB mission before the churches. It will continue to take extra effort to keep both US and Canadian constituencies actively committed to and involved in this mission partnership.

In addition, the growth of the global MB church also requires more changes in both church and mission structures and relationships. ICOMB has appointed its first staff person to work at increasing connections between the 19 MB conferences. ICOMB has also created the Global Mission Alliance as a new avenue for international partnership in MB mission. We have experimented over the past two decades with the formation of international MB mission teams. Will the GMA provide the global MB family with a channel for the expansion of such teams? The coming decade will present opportunities and challenges in seeking to make these structures functional and effective.

Mission Funding

I have described the changes that were approved at the end of my tenure as General Director. Some had feared that these changes would make it more difficult for the MBMSI missionaries already on the field to accomplish their ministry. I am encouraged by the reports that most of the existing missionaries have already developed adequate relational funding teams in the two years since the new approach was introduced. I am also encouraged by reports that several new missionaries have been able to develop their support by this approach and are already on the field or are soon headed there. As more potential missionaries develop these kinds of relationships, I believe that we may again see a steady stream of new long-term missionaries going out, just as we did in decades past.

However, another aspect of overseas funding that has historically been part of the role of MBMSI over the past decades is in some danger in the new model, which gives priority to funding North American missionaries. This issue involves the subsidies from the MBMSI general budget to partner conferences that have partially funded some of their own programs and national workers during the past 40 years. Can some funding of such ministries continue so that relationships between churches in North America and churches in the two-thirds world can be nurtured?

I believe that there is no question that each conference needs to take primary responsibility for its own ministries. But, when it comes to funding those ministries in a global family of faith, the fact remains that the distribution of financial resources within our faith family is very uneven.

Many of us in North America and Western Europe enjoy incomes that place us in the top ten percent of world incomes. That makes us the "rich ones" in the family. Can we find appropriate ways to share our wealth with the poorer members of the family without creating unhealthy dependencies? Perhaps ICOMB will help us to discuss these issues and to find solutions based on kingdom values.

Mission to the Least Reached

As described in Chapter Six, the Global Mission Guidelines priorities for 1995-2005 shifted our mission focus back toward its original focus in 1900. The first MB missionaries sent from North America to India through MBM/S were ministering to a group of Telegu people who had little or no knowledge of the gospel message. During the past decade, we have appointed several new missionaries to work with least-reached peoples.

A major challenge in the coming decades will be to continue this refocusing, even though it is difficult. Many of the least reached people groups that remain are in that category because they are very difficult to reach, especially by westerners. Most Arabic speakers in the Middle East and North Africa are followers of Islam. The work of the Youssefs with radio, TV, and the website has been helpful. But Middle Easterners are especially suspicious of North Americans, as many view recent military conflicts in that region as religious wars. I am encouraged to see the calls being made in MBMSI literature for a new wave of workers for North Africa. But perhaps could more of those could be sent from MB conferences in South America or Central Africa, rather than from North America?

The appointment of Team2000 was a major step forward in our refocusing to the least reached. The team has established a witness in Chonburi just at a time when many Thai people seem to be more open to the gospel message than they have been for the past century. It is also encouraging that more teams are being formed to minister in a country that has barely 1-2% Christians. However, many other least-reached peoples live in parts of Asia that are not as open to receive missionaries as Thailand is. We have begun to address that with the new team to Delhi in north India. Earlier efforts to place workers in Pakistan have been suspended due to security concerns. During recent decades, we have placed

English teachers in China, but they have had little effect on the many least-reached people groups who live there. Will the day come when MB missionaries will again be in China, dedicated to church planting among the least-reached, as the Bartels were in the early 20th century?

Again, we need to reflect on the new reality of the MB church in the 21st century. We are a global church and the call to global mission is for all of us. I trust we will not return to the old paradigms that viewed MB mission as primarily the responsibility of the North American MB church. As we pray together, build vision together, and share our global resources, both human and financial, our mission to take the gospel to the least reached will be even more effective.

Long Term Commitments

MB mission from North America in the past four decades has been characterized by tremendous growth of opportunities for short term mission. I have described that process in Chapter Five. While much of what happens through short term mission is positive for the participants, in many cases it is really more exposure to mission than the practice of mission. Evangelism and church planting among the least reached take a long term commitment.

A commitment to career missions was a characteristic of many of our MBM/S missionaries of the 20th century. Many served for 20 to 40 or more years on the field. During the writing of this manuscript, I have been moved by reports of the death of several of these pioneers who persevered: Herb Friesen, Ted Fast, Paul Friesen, Sam Krause, and Jacob Loewen. I worked with all of them during my 40 years of connection with MBMSI. To view mission from their perspective was like "standing on the shoulders of giants." Their passing marks the end of an era for MB mission.

During the decade of the 1990s, I was disappointed when a fairly significant number of first term MBM/S missionaries made a decision to end service with just one three-year term. Even more disturbing was when they made this decision before the end of their second year, while still in the midst of culture and language acquisition. The ten-year commitment made by Team2000 was a step in the right direction. Mission that will impact an unevangelized people-group with the gospel and result in a multiplying church movement takes long-term commitments.

The large and growing MB conferences in India and Congo today are testimonies to such commitments.

We live in an age of fast food, getting cash from ATMs, and a general expectation of quick or even instant results. I believe that some of the fascination with mission trips and other forms of short-term mission is simply one more expression of our desire for the quick fix. We must challenge this generation again to count the cost of mission. To reach the least reached will take a commitment to sacrifice and perseverance, both on the part of those who go and also for those who support them in prayer and finances.

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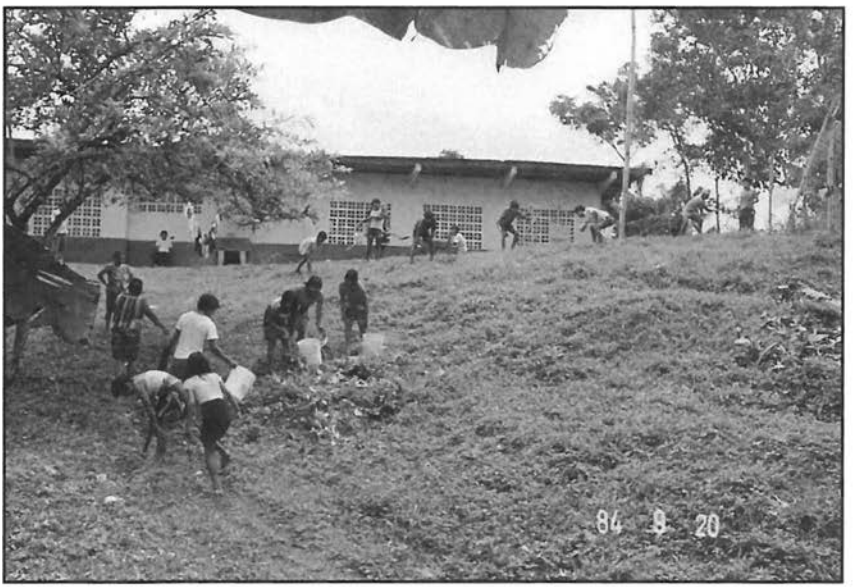
ICOMB meeting in Bielefeld, Germany in 1994

Student clean-up day at the IEU Yaviza Center in Panama



MBM/S Bogota Colombia missionary team in 1990

ICOMB meeting in Bavaria, Germany in 1998

Short-term team on a "dugout canoe cruise" on Darien river in Panama

MBM/S Sao Paulo, Brazil missionary team in 1989

ICOMB meeting in Bogota in 1996

ESENGO choir arrives at MWC Calcutta in 1997

Meeting with Elder Nicolai Dueckman from Russia at MWC Calcutta

Visit to Kinshasa, Congo in 2000

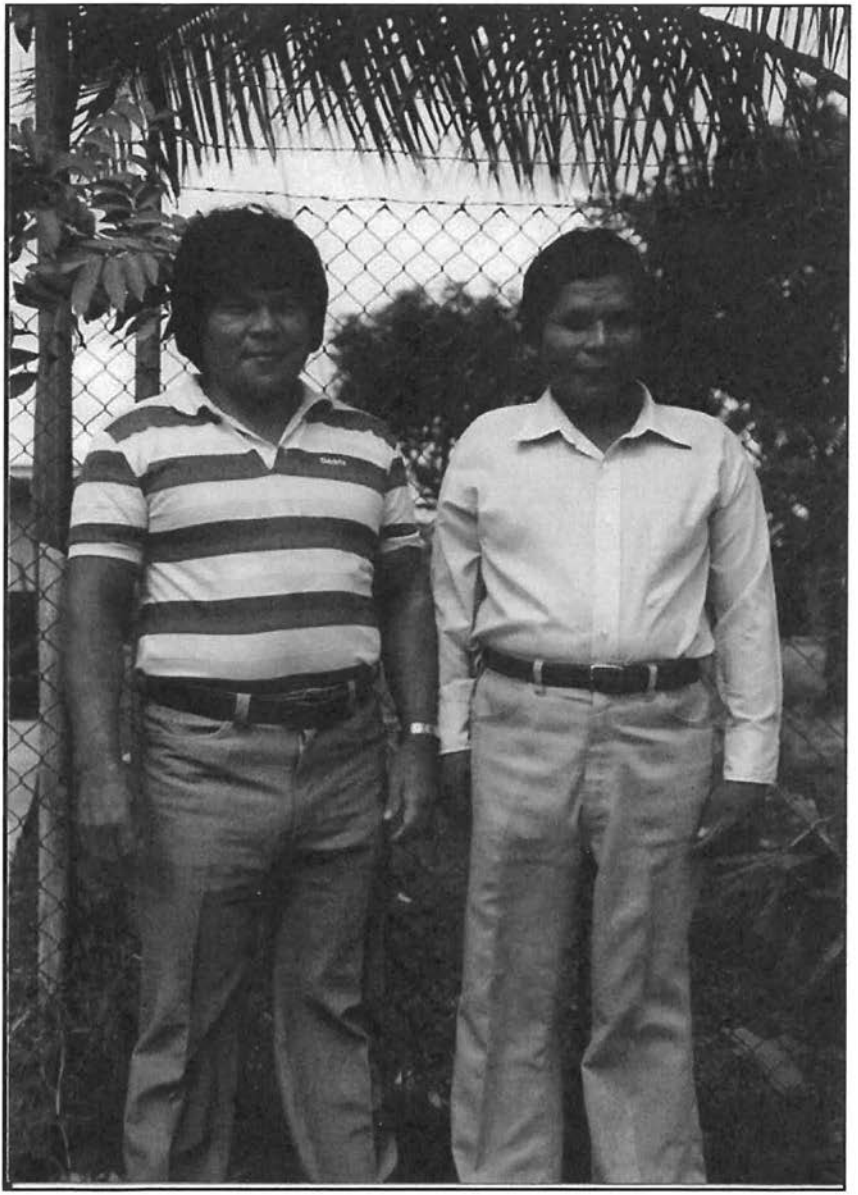
Presentation to Dr. P.B. Arnold in India of Faculty Endowment Funds - 1999

Village airstrip in Darien, Panama with Ernie Friesen and Rigo Degaiza

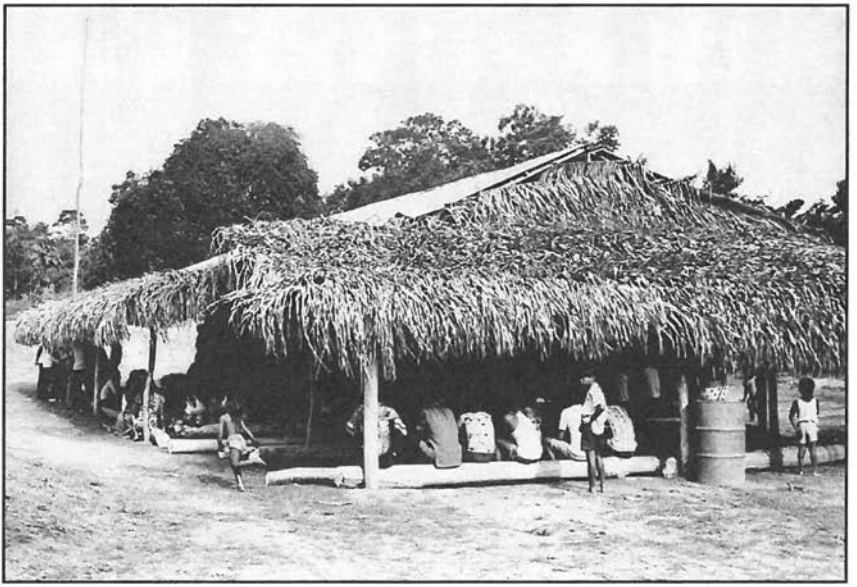
Consultation Visit to Siaulai, Lithuania w/ Dave Dyck in 1993

Exploration visit to Lisbon Portugal with Vic Adrian & Manuel Franco in 1987

1998 Lithuania Visit with Franz Rathmair



Narciso Pacheco (left) and Agustin Membora (right)-first IEU Bible School graduates in Panama



IEU convention building in a Darien village

ICOMB members with Bogota church members

In 2006, Harold Ens completed over 35 years of service with Mennonite Brethren missions. His work began as a Christian Service worker in Colombia in 1966. For 12 of those years (1992-2004), he served as General Director of Mennonite Brethren Mission and Service International (MBMSI).

This book gives detailed and valuable information and perspectives on the 40-year period that it covers. The book is divided into three sections. The first section, which is relatively brief, is essentially an autobiographical survey of Harold and Helen's career of involvement in missions, which includes a four-year term in Kinshasa (Congo), about seven years in Panama, a period as Latin America Secretary, and then a final period as General Director beginning in1992.

The second section (chs. 2-9) describes the changes in structure, strategy, and policies related to MB missions. Harold provides insightful comments and reflections about how those changes came about and the impact they had.

The third main section gives a brief overview of MB mission activity in over 70 countries around the world, with somewhat more detail on the major areas where Mennonite Brethren were involved. These chapters include references to Harold's own involvement in these countries, particularly in his role as GeneralDirector.

In the final chapter, Harold provides his own assessment of the future of MB mission, which includes references to some of the developments since he left his role as General Director.

This book makes an important contribution to our understanding of MB mission in the latter part of the 20th century, particularly as the MB Church celebrates its 150th anniversary in 2010 and looks to the future to understand how it can fulfill its missionary mandate in the 21st century.

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